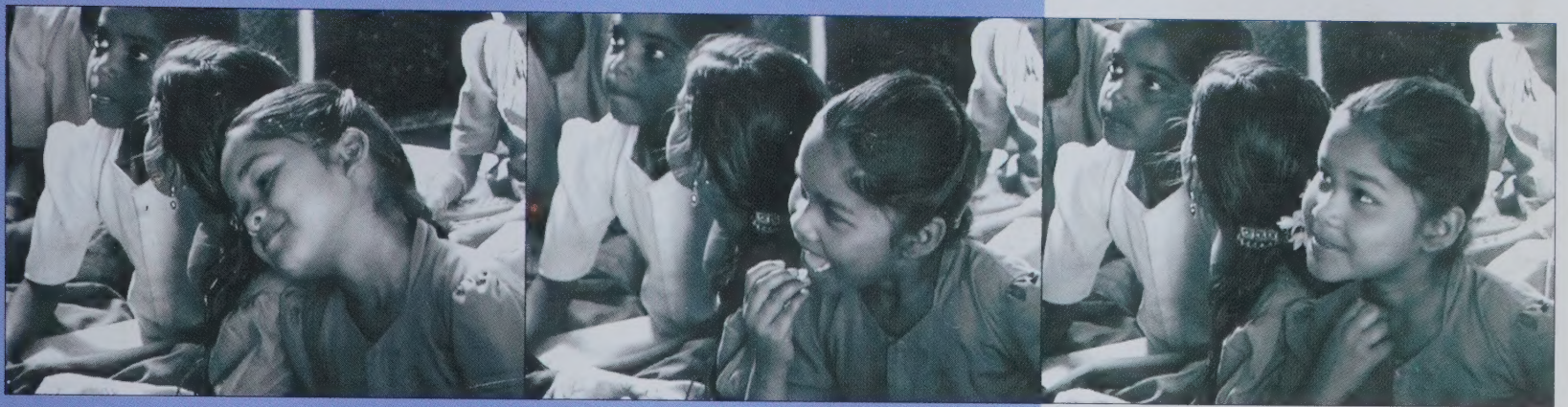


# Prajayatna

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**Community - owned schools in Karnataka**  
*The new agenda in education reform*





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# Prajayatna

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*The new agenda in education reform*



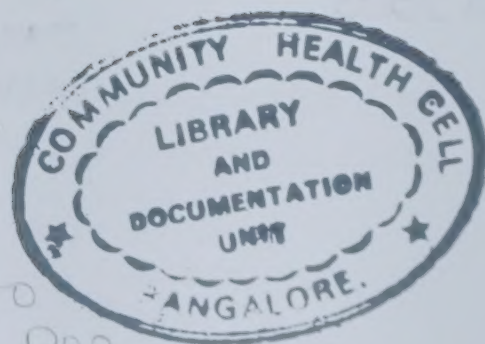
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MAYA (Movement for Alternatives and Youth Awareness) is a Karnataka-based, development and training organisation working, since 14 years, to address children's rights, with a specific focus on the eradication of child labour. Prajayatna is the education reform programme of MAYA.



## Acknowledgements:

We would like to take this opportunity to thank NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) for their support in conducting and documenting this study, Mr.Rolf Küetel in providing valuable insights during the formulation of the questionnaire, framework for the study and analysis of the data; Ms.Latha.G and her team for assisting in analysing the data for the study. We would also like to acknowledge all the volunteers across the six districts who did the data collection in the schools/villages. Most importantly our sincerest gratitude to the communities in these villages, teachers, elected representatives and educational administrators across the six districts who accompanied and worked with the Prajayatna team to make this endeavour a meaningful sharing experience.



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# FOREWORD

This is the first endeavour of Prajayatna to comprehensively document the nature of its intervention to impact educational reform in a manner that not only provides a context for internal reflection to determine future strategic directions but also one for sharing the experiences, achievements and concerns of different stakeholders involved in the movement.

Though the commentary predominantly encompasses the operational dimensions and the underlying understanding and learning that shape the continuous evolution of the programme, one should be careful not to interpret it as an attempt to propagate a model. It is more a document that provides an insight into the basic organic evolutionary nature of the work and the importance of such a reflective process towards facilitating any community-based change. With the understanding that any intervention process would be context-specific and evolve from its own interpretation of, response to, and learning from the context, the document also attempts to delineate common denominators or governing principles that would probably have general applicability for any similar intervention. That aspects like 'appreciation of the context of the intervention', 'understanding of the education system with its associated stakeholders', and 'definition of ownership and quality in education' would necessarily have to be determined from individual context-specific learning and would therefore influence the assimilation of the aforementioned governing principles within the intervention process, cannot be sufficiently emphasised.

Another aspect often overlooked when evaluating the effectiveness of an approach or intervention, is a reflection on the internal structure and people therein shaping the course of an intervention or movement. To a considerable extent the strength of an effort like Prajayatna depends on reflection within the programme team and its work, of the same philosophy and collective vision that is determined as the programme vision. Therefore 'ownership of the programme and its objectives by team members' and 'a decentralised operational framework that facilitates innovative strategies' become crucial components that establish effectiveness of ongoing work processes.

Prajayatna would like to hereby clarify that the following commentary derives its strength from the various stakeholders involved in the movement and their ongoing work to effect change - the communities, the civic institutions, the Panchayat Raj structures, and the educational bureaucracy across the six districts of Bangalore Urban, Bangalore Rural, Mysore, Chitradurga, Bellary and Bijapur.

Responsibility associated with the preparation and presentation of the document in its present form however rests entirely with Prajayatna.







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### Evolution

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This chapter traces the evolution of Prajayatna from the context of MAYA's work on issues of child labour and education and the initial experiences and learning that defined future strategies to its presence in the 6 districts in which the initiative is operational at present.

### Understanding community ownership

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The chapter provides an overview of the ongoing activities and processes of Prajayatna's work with different stakeholders and the understanding underlying these processes. Relevant case studies from the impact assessment survey provide an insight into the emergent nature of the processes and the field-level realities associated with the facilitation of the different processes. .

### Impact assessment study

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This section addresses primarily the objectives of the impact assessment survey undertaken by Prajayatna, the design of the survey process and the key outcomes of the work so far. The findings from the impact assessment survey, including quantitative and qualitative data, are presented within the larger context of the change paradigm that Prajayatna envisions.

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### Context within MAYA's work

**P**rajayatna - the Citizens' Initiative on Elementary Education in Karnataka - is a citizens' movement that seeks to *facilitate a systemic change in the existing educational model through institutionalising processes of community ownership that would effect structures, practices and policy of elementary education in Karnataka.*

MAYA (Movement for Alternatives and Youth Awareness), of which Prajayatna is a part, has been working since 1989 on the issue of child labour. Having spent its initial years campaigning against the issue, MAYA began direct interventions with children and communities in the urban slums and low-income areas in both Bangalore Urban and Rural districts. At the time MAYA's main efforts involved enrolment of out-of school children into non-formal education classes as preparation for enrolment into government schools. Intensive work with parents to enhance their responsibility towards children in the area was also another focus area.



Children in a classroom in HD Kote taluk  
Mysore district

Community based structures like women's groups (mahila sanghas) were initiated with the basic purpose of involving parents in child care and were supported by MAYA to address pertinent community issues and ensure that all children attend school.

The engagement with the education system, children and the community, over time, provided some critical and invaluable insights which significantly contributed towards the initiation of Prajayatna. The strategy of re-enrolling drop-out children to school was found to be insufficient. MAYA learned that it was the way the schooling system was designed that systematically alienated the children; that parents did not see the advantage of their children attending school the way it presently functioned nor did they see any role for themselves to engage with the school or effect its improvement. The situation of the school and what it offered provided little evidence of its functional advantage over other alternatives available to the parents and children.

The lack of accountability and transparency within the system and the complete absence of any form of control by the local community, had resulted in very little consistent attention on their part to ensure that children remain in school and engage in any form of relevant learning. MAYA realised that little would change unless there is active participation of the community-parents, teachers, elected representatives, civil society groups, government functionaries and other concerned citizens - in educational reform, moving towards a situation where the community determines and manages the education system at the local level. Prajayatna thus evolved with a very clear goal of **'ensuring quality education to all children in Karnataka by facilitating community ownership of educational processes'**.



## *Evolution of Prajayatna's work*

### **Building Participation and the Urban Launch**

Initial efforts of Prajayatna were focussed on enrolling all concerned citizens by creating structures and awareness for participation, in the movement, of different interest groups (like children's, women's, youth and teachers' groups). These groups were envisioned as key mechanisms for building a demand for quality in education at all levels - the local, the district, and the state. It was believed that only through a large scale, broad based campaign targeting all sections of the society and all levels of the government would significant changes be effected in the current educational structure.

To elicit responses at the community level, interactions were held with children, teachers and parents in 30 government and private schools in Bangalore Urban (South) prior to Prajayatna's formal launch in the state of Karnataka. Strongly reinforcing the imperative for reform in elementary education to be a citizens' agenda, these responses also demonstrated the need for a forum to articulate this agenda.

Prajayatna was formally launched in Karnataka in Bangalore Urban District on 13th February 1999. The launch helped to introduce the concept of Prajayatna in Bangalore, invite public responses on the present education system, and enrol about 170 volunteers.



The launch in Bangalore Rural district.



## Evolution of the School Information Campaign and the Shikshana Grama Sabha

The enrolment of volunteers was by itself not sufficient to initiate reform processes; further discussions with the volunteers culminated in a workshop on the 14th of March, 1999, wherein areas of participation were identified and volunteers formalised an action plan for implementation of the same in their respective localities.

It was soon realised that these disparate efforts did not have the desired impact either in terms of creating awareness or alleviating the existing situation. The absence of a tangible process which people could relate to, both in terms of their immediate needs and their redressal, affected real participation.

### *The Teachers' Strike and Opinion Poll*

At the onset of the 1999 school year, ninety lakh school-going children could not attend school as a result of a strike by government primary school teachers all over the state between the 28th of June and the 7th of July.

An opinion poll was conducted to highlight the apathy of the system wherein even after classes resumed it was taken for granted that neither the parents nor the children would question this sudden closure of schools. The fact that the strike created a situation where thousands of children might have dropped out of school and those newly enrolled may not resume school was totally disregarded. It must also be kept in mind that while the teachers had the teachers' unions to protect their interests, the children and their parents had none.

The opinion poll was conducted in three districts - Bangalore Urban, Bangalore Rural, and Chitradurga - spanning 18,000 people - parents, children, teachers and other interested citizens. This was a new experience for parents who said that they had never been asked their opinion regarding the school administration or the education system. The response from parents in all the areas was similar with regard to the dissatisfaction they felt toward the condition of the Government schools and the indifference evident in the school environment.

Prajayatna learnt that there was an absence of any effort to ascertain people's perspective on issues concerning their lives. It was also understood that given relevant information and mechanisms for articulation, people could distinctively perceive and enunciate their concerns and expectations.

### *Launch of Prajayatna in Bangalore Rural District in Nov 1999*

Prajayatna was formally introduced to Bangalore Rural District on November 13th, 1999. The launch was an extensive process that started some months ahead with concerted efforts by numerous volunteers and MAYA staff to reach out to communities in the taluk at various levels. The launch succeeded in reaching out to a large and diverse audience.



Over three thousand people attended the launch besides 330 people who participated in the various forums which provided a scenario that was important and relevant to exploring the realm of contemporary education.

The above experiences and the learning thereof led to the search for an appropriate mechanism for engaging people in issues of educational reform which simultaneously impacts school processes, and the conception of the School Information Campaign.

The **School Information Campaign** (SIC) was initiated as a two-page questionnaire aimed at collecting data on some basic aspects of infrastructure, enrolment, teacher-child ratio pertaining to the local government school. Over the following year, the SIC questionnaire evolved into a bilingual 23-page comprehensive village and school survey format.

Information from the School Information Campaign set the context for the village meetings on education - the **Shikshana Grama Sabhas**. In spirit, the Grama Sabha (village meeting) means that all citizens of the village come together to collectively decide on matters concerning them. Prajayatna sought to utilise the immense potential that Grama Sabhas held for enabling participation at the local level to facilitate a discussion on education among the village community and thereby initiate a mechanism for the local people to assume responsibility for educational reforms.

### Linkages with the Educational Bureaucracy

The recognition that demands for change can be strengthened in the context of a responsive system led to our interactions with the educational bureaucracy.

Interfacing with the administration (Block Education Officers, Block Resource Coordinators and Cluster Resource Coordinators) to gather information about the number of schools, the functionally better schools, the number of teachers, etc. as well as to develop a better understanding of the educational system led to the presence of Prajayatna in Cluster/Circle level meetings of Head-teachers and teachers training meetings convened by the educational department. These meetings with the educational functionaries and teachers served as a platform to share our experience of the educational system and initiate a dialogue on issues like "quality in education" and concerns like "dropouts", "irregularity in teachers' attendance", etc. Exposure visits to the schools which were regarded by the department to be functionally better and having more efficient teachers revealed a strong correlation between the 'quality of schools' and the 'extent of community involvement in school processes'.



Meeting with educational administrators, Karwar, North Kanara district.



Functionaries were encouraging and supportive, but it increasingly became obvious that individuals or educational functionaries would not be willing to assume responsibility for a system, that had neither attempted to build a mechanism for ownership nor was perceived by the concerned people as pertinent; the concern was magnified by the absence of any information of educational needs of the people at large. This learning also had a significant role to play in the evolution of the School Information Campaign and the Shikshana Grama Sabha mentioned earlier.

### **Establishing an Identity and District Coordination Centres**

In a process that was simultaneous with the emerging efforts to define a broader strategic direction to its work, Prajayatna was trying to create an identity as a forum where people could decide to participate in various aspects towards reform in elementary education. A forum which truly reflected the concerns of the people implied bringing people closer to the campaign.

The work initiated in the six districts of Bangalore Urban, Bangalore Rural, Mysore, Chitradurga, Bellary, and Bijapur was based on MAYA's experience of co-ordinating the Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL) in the state of Karnataka. The campaign work developed an understanding of these districts which reflected the representation of a varied set of geographical, socio-economic and educational contexts for work to be initiated.

Out of the six, four (Mysore, Bangalore Rural, Bijapur and Bellary) are districts where the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was initiated in the II<sup>nd</sup> phase and have witnessed certain amount of project investment on infrastructure issues. Chitradurga, though one of the backward districts in the state, is not yet covered under the DPEP programme, but has two taluks where the Janashala, another programme by the education department, operates. Bangalore Urban is not a DPEP district and is characterised by a proliferation of private and aided schools acting as functional substitutes for the existing government schools afflicted by their inherently alienating circumstances. Besides the innate differences in socio-economic and cultural environment evident in an observation that encompasses the inter-district milieu, other diversities have gradually become manifest during the course of the work across the six districts. Such diversities are however only indicative of the varied context of Prajayatna's intervention and how efforts to effect community ownership of educational processes should take cognisance of different factors even while framing strategies to provide appropriate information, linkages to resources and exposure to an understanding of a particular system (here the education system) to enable the community.





Prajayatra's initial work showed that there are certain aspects that would forestall any initiative toward sustainable educational reform:

- A lack of understanding among the primary stakeholders, the community, of how the education system works.
- Inadequate and inaccessible information which marginalises a community already discriminated against by its socio-economic status.
- Unaccountable structures and mechanisms that have failed to build the capacity of the community to enable its active involvement and creative participation in any change process and also perpetrated a process of dependency.

Through the experiences, it was realised that education can be qualitative and educational reform sustainable only if it is based on a community vision gradually evolved and consolidated through processes of community ownership.

**Quality in education** has different connotations for the community as is evident from the various activities and processes of Prajayatra:

- *a vision for the school that sets the future direction for the school ;*
- *a more transparent system which provides the parents, the child and the community information about the school performance ;*
- *teachers to be effective more as facilitators of learning ;*
- *a higher level of community participation that supports learning ;*
- *a conducive school environment ;*
- *an understanding of explicit (caste, religion, gender bias, etc.) and implicit (access to transport facilities, cost of educational material, etc.) discriminatory practices that marginalise children and pre-empt education for all ;*
- *and*
- *ability of the education system to deliver appropriate skills to be effective in the context of the immediate community and the contemporary needs of the society at large .*

In the light of an understanding of a 'Quality in Education' which would encompass all the aforementioned aspects through processes that enable the community to define its vision of education, accountability would assume a new meaning - a sense of ownership to realise this vision.

Therefore, the work is focused towards facilitating appropriate structures and developing institutional experience that

- increase citizens' articulation in existing decision making processes.
- involve all stakeholders - in a discussion of continuous improvement of educational governance to create practices of feedback and monitoring among stakeholders.
- consolidate a collective vision of education in the community and enable realisation of the same.



## A paradigm for sustainable change

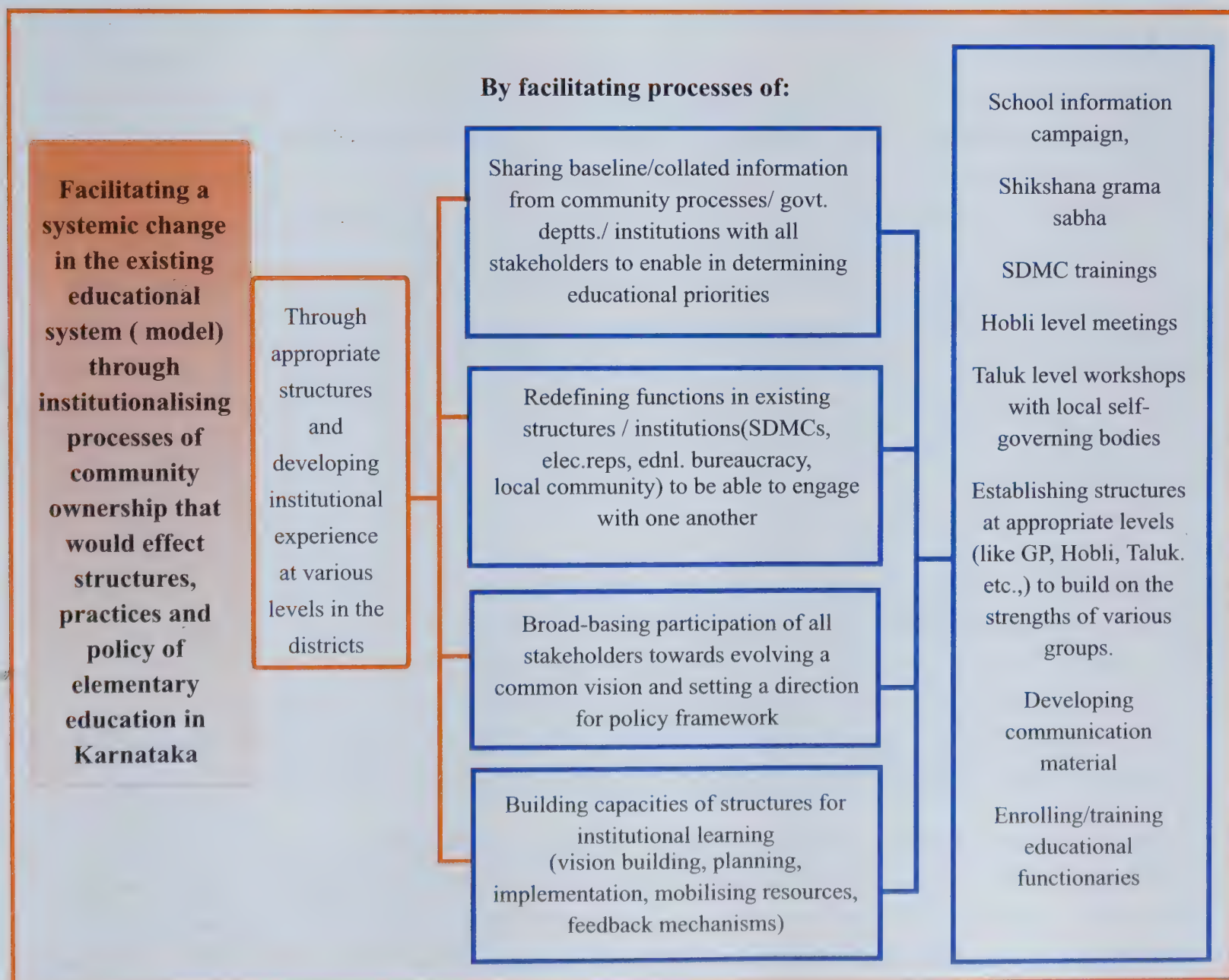
What has emerged from the understanding that defines the work in the above direction is the need for a concept of governance that

- *encompasses both the State and the larger civil society, and*
- *institutionalises social interaction by involving civil society through structures and experiences where they assume responsibility and become legitimate bodies born out of iterated experiences with the State (government).*

Such a concept of governance and paradigm for sustainable change focuses on the overlaps or linkages among three key elements. They are:

- Community articulating their vision of education and evolving a framework for educational policy to realise this vision.
- Community engaging (with all stakeholders) in the implementation of the above through structures and mechanisms evolved by them.
- State trying to continuously redefine its operational paradigm (in terms of structure, role and related institutions) to work with community evolved structures and mechanisms towards community ownership of educational processes.

The following diagram attempts to provide a framework that links Prajayatna's ongoing activities and processes with different stakeholders to the aforementioned paradigm for sustainable change:





## Summary of processes and activities

Though work was initiated at different times and has since then progressed at a different pace in the six districts of Bangalore Urban, Bangalore Rural, Mysore, Chitradurga, Bellary and Bijapur, some common parameters underlie the manner in which the interventions have evolved across these districts. Initial work in these districts included setting up of a working base in the district, identification of key staff to initiate work; collection of basic information related to the district in terms of social, political, and economic indicators, the extent of the area and other physical characteristics of the district. Working with the administrative and educational bureaucracy, building contacts with NGOs and other civil society institutions to identify Prajayatna's presence in the districts came next. After building a preliminary identity and primary contact with concerned individuals and institutions, work began with the School Information Campaign followed by the Shikshana Grama Sabhas.

### *The School Information Campaign*

The experience of working closely with the communities and schools in the rural areas during the initial stages revealed a lack of information, both in terms of relevance and access, among the community, on the existing education system. Even official plans and projections were not informed by reliable data or statistics at the individual school level. Consequently, the School Information Campaign (SIC) was launched, not only to create a reliable database of information on government schools but also to serve as a platform to initiate community-involvement in matters pertaining to the local school.

As part of the School Information Campaign, data is collected on aspects pertaining to the school ranging from school infrastructure, enrolment, dropouts, teacher-child ratio, teacher regularity, to existing structures for community participation and their efficacy. Field test of the SIC booklet helped incorporate more specific aspects pertaining to the school rather than generalities that would contribute little towards any decision-making to address the issue. Data components were therefore fine-tuned; e.g. 'availability of toilets' was replaced by 'usability of toilets'; 'availability of teaching-learning material' was supplemented with 'their actual usage'.

The need to present the comprehensive information gathered through the SIC in a simple format to initiate the discussion during the subsequent village level meeting was also addressed by developing a two-page illustrative fact-sheet that summarised some of the more important aspects. The information of the local government school in a village for the School Information Campaign questionnaire is obtained from the school head - teacher, other teachers, community members and the same information is consequently validated by the larger community during the Shikshana Grama Sabha process.

To help better dissemination and accessibility of the School information, a Computer Accessible Information Database was also envisioned, work on which is in the final stages of completion. This initiative is expected to create a space for corporate, local industry, civic institutions, development initiatives and even individuals to partner with the Government schools to develop infrastructure and



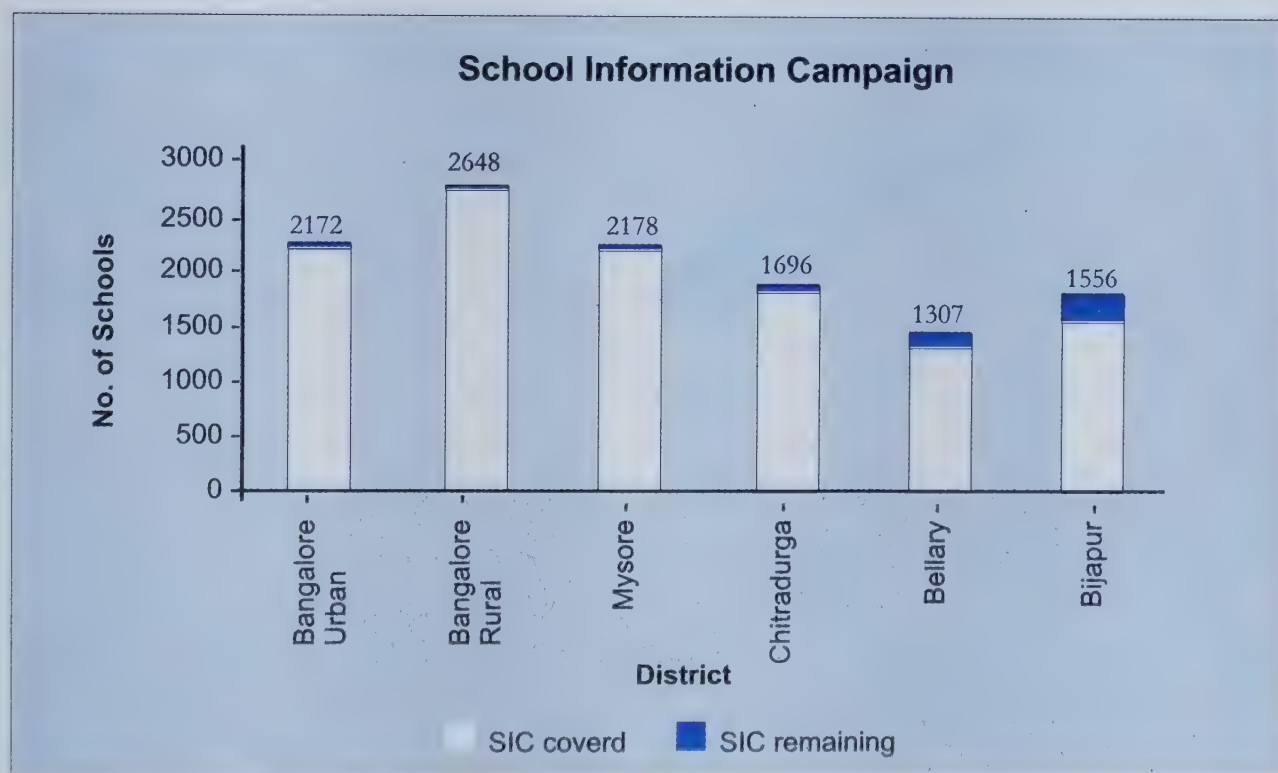
find ways to work with the children, teachers, and local community to improve the quality and extend the scope of the school.

The School Information Campaign has helped build a comprehensive primary database of government schools in the six working districts. The information from the booklet is used extensively, for both field-level processes and also campaigning and advocacy with the educational administration.

Facilitators use the school information data as primary information to gauge the basic situation of the village and the community in relation to the local school and integrate this as material complementary to their own understanding of the local dynamics during their visit to the village for the Shikshana Grama Sabha. This village level meeting itself is facilitated on the basis of information obtained through the school information data, as are most of the other activities, wherein information from the data collected forms a fundamental contributory element either through its appearance in the form of Reports (Taluk and District education reports) or Charts (Gram Panchayat level charts for School Committees).

Graph 1

No. of schools covered under the School Information Campaign (till May 2003) is 11557



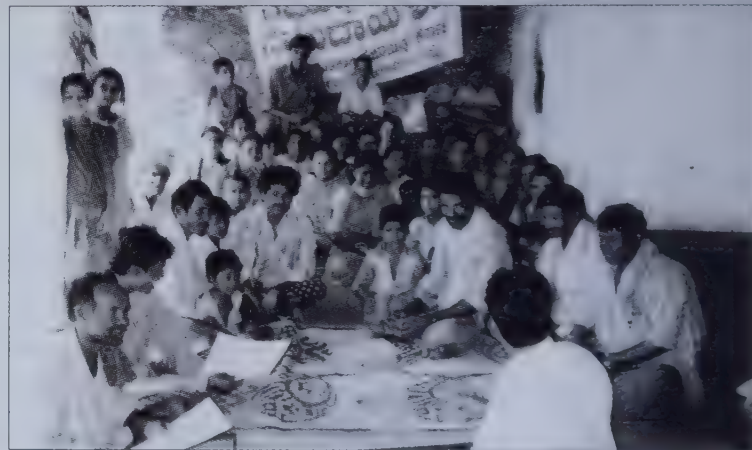


## Shikshana Grama Sabha

Information from the School Information Campaign sets the context for the village meetings on education - the Shikshana Grama Sabhas (SGSs). The open discussions facilitated at these community meetings not only allow presentation and verification of information from the SICs but also initiate a community-level dialogue on critical areas of concern pertaining to the local school and education of the children, necessary action to address these concerns, and identification of responsibilities for ensuring the same.

The Shikshana Grama Sabha comprises parents, Gram Panchayat members, children, teachers, mahila sanghas, youth groups and other members in the community concerned with education. The discussion at these meetings focuses on enabling people to bring about change, to take responsibility for their own development and in the process, hold the respective authorities accountable to deliver. Efforts are also initiated to enrol the teachers to take some action about the school in conjunction with the community.

Participation in the Shikshana Grama Sabha is institutionalised through the School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMC\*s- a 9 member school committee comprising of parents), which follows up on decisions taken at these meetings. The school committees are supported in implementing the decisions taken at these meetings. The follow-up activities of these committees are an on-going programme whereby the group has access to assistance from Prajayatna as and when necessary.



Meeting in Jannenahalli Lambani hatti, Challekere taluka, Chitradurga district

The Shikshana Grama Sabhas in many ways reflect the essence of the constitutionally mandated, but predominantly functionally defunct, Grama Sabha whereby the Gram Panchayat is supposed to give due consideration to the recommendations and suggestions made in the Grama Sabhas\*\*. Moreover, the Shikshana Grama Sabhas realise in reality another function which the normally non-operational Grama Sabhas is ascribed with - that of "mobilising voluntary contribution and rendering assistance in the implementation for community development programmes/schemes"\*\*\* (in this case the school).

\* The term SDMC and school committees are used interchangeably in this document

\*\* From the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993.



### *defining participation - experiences from the Shikshana Grama Sabhas*

In the village of Dadamatti, Sarwad Gram Panchayat in Bijapur Rural Taluk, there are around 350 families with a total population of 1553. Though 25 kms away from Bijapur, the village has poor access as there are no proper roads. The village population is predominantly dependent on rain-harvested agriculture for their livelihood. There are a number of Sanghas (local groups) in the village functioning as self-help groups. There is one Higher primary school and an Anganwadi (Govt. run pre-school facility).

Consequent to the Shikshana Grama Sabha facilitated in March 2002, the school committee and other members from the community have assumed responsibility for and effected a number of changes in the local school. Local contributions were mobilised and Rs. 2500 was utilised for repair of doors and windows while Rs. 4500 was spent on whitewashing of the school building. The Gram Panchayat has arranged for a kitchen and water connection to the school. Plans are underway to register the school land, remove an arrack shop and an electricity transformer from near the school, construct toilets for teachers and children and provide for a school-gate. The school committee is working towards involving the mahila sanghas in discussions about children's enrolment and attendance.

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The village of Ulavathi is about 10 km from the taluk headquarters in Hagari Bommanahalli Taluk, Bellary District. There is one Kannada Higher primary school and Urdu Lower primary school in the village. After 3 teachers from the school were deputed to another school, there was an acute problem of inadequate teachers in the school which, inspite of assurances from the BEO, was not solved. The Shikshana Grama Sabha was facilitated in the above context.

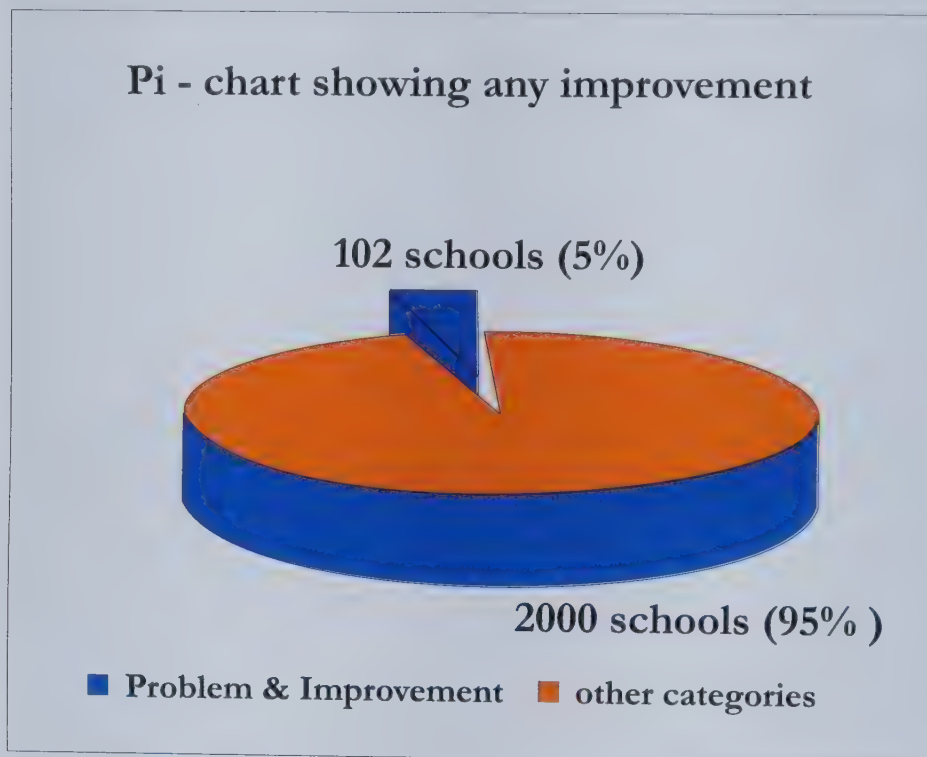
The lack of teachers became the driving agenda and follow-up from the community has led to the withdrawal of the deputation of teachers by the BEO. A toilet has been constructed for the school using resources from the Taluk Panchayat. Simultaneously, the school committee members took up the issue of lack of rooms and teachers for the Urdu school with the BEO and Taluk Panchayat which has resulted in the construction of 2 rooms and provision of teachers for the Urdu school.

The village community has also approached the local MLA for construction of a compound wall for the school for which they have received an assurance of contributions from the MLA fund as well as support from the Taluk Panchayat.



The impact of the Shikshana Grama Sabhas conducted so far across the six districts may be seen in the initiatives that people have begun to take. People have started monitoring the functioning of the school, leading to an improvement in teachers' regularity. They are contributing towards enhancing the infrastructure of schools by, for e.g. building a roof or a compound wall. Contributions are also in the form of time, energy and money to ensure that the schools function better, increasing the sense of ownership of the community. Relations between the teachers and the community; and the Gram Panchayat and the school have shown improvement in some areas.

Graph 2



*Graph 2: The pi-chart shows that out of a total of 2102 schools reached out to, through the Shikshana Grama Sabhas or SDMC(school committee) training programmes, some improvement has been effected in 2000 or 95 % of the schools (Impact Assessment Survey 1999 - 2002 Prajayatna)*

No. of Shikshana Grama Sabhas facilitated(till May 2003) is 1127

In about 2000 government schools across the 6 districts (Refer: Graph 2), the community has initiated activities pertaining to the local school to address issues ranging from provision of school furniture, provision of water and toilet facilities, maintenance and repair of the school building, registration of land for the school to arrangement of land for school playground, arrangement of electricity and provision of teaching-learning materials. The community is now more aware of different incentive schemes and is impelling the concerned authorities for their timely and regular implementation.



## *Interventions with decentralised civic institutions*

In order to increase community and parental participation in the educational process, the Government of Karnataka introduced the formation of **School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMC)** from the academic year 2001-02. The SDMCs replace the earlier Village Education Committees (in rural areas) and School Betterment Committees (in urban areas). The envisaged structure and concept of the SDMCs contains certain progressive features. This with appropriate facilitation, can result in effecting a decentralised civic institution, which would be a definite improvement over similar structures previously formed.

### *responses to the formation of SDMCs*

“Since the SDMC has parents of children studying in the school as its members, it enables them to understand the administrative processes in the school, be aware of the donations received and the ongoing construction work (if any) and enhances their responsibility in ensuring the effective implementation of the same. Thus, it enables good management of the schools. In addition, since the elected representatives are also members of the SDMC, it provides an opportunity for direct interaction between the parents, teachers and elected representatives to discuss and jointly take decisions regarding the school.”

*G Nagaraj, GP member, Pothalhatti, Chilakanhatti GP, Hospet Taluk, Bellary*

“The initiation of the SDMCs is a significant effort. With the community assuming complete responsibility for the schools, development in all respects will be possible. The SBCs/ VECs were limited to elected representatives, and persons from upper castes and higher incomes. However, with the formation of the SDMCs now, there is a free environment for parents to come forward to discuss and assume responsibility.”

*Basavarajappa, HM, GKHPS, Tamattakallu village, Guddadharangavanahalli GP, Chitradurga*

“Now, we will feel that this is our school. Since our experience is limited, if we get initial training, we will make our village school a model school. I think this is possible in all schools.”

*SDMC president, Heggooru, T Narsipura Taluka, Mysore*



For a committee like the School Committee to perform as envisioned, a clear understanding of its roles and responsibilities is essential amongst both the school committee members and education department officials and any training and capacity-building of these local civic institutions should be ensured as an on-going process. From October 2001, training programmes were initiated for the SDMCs in order to strengthen these decentralised management structures and enable them to take initiative and follow-up on decisions that lead to mobilisation of local resources towards school betterment, enhanced accountability from school functionaries, and strengthened linkages with the community and also local self-government bodies.

The training programmes, facilitated at the Gram Panchayat level, are attended by the school committee members of all the schools that are part of the Gram Panchayat (In a Gram Panchayat there are an average of 6-8 villages). The training meetings are facilitated at two levels: (a) Firstly, building and enabling a collective vision of these committees (which necessarily implies articulation of a collective vision relating to education, reform in education, and the school system) among the members themselves and sharing to broad-base the same with the parent community during meetings. (b) Secondly, reinforcing this vision through formulation and implementation of micro-plans pertaining to the school.

Prajayatna is also working to sustain the Shikshana Grama Sabha as a simple and powerful means for mobilising communities to initiate action for reform at the local level through the school committee. Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the school committees within the context of the larger village community, sets in process a means of accountability of these committees as a structure towards the community. Decisions facilitated in the village education meetings, also identify these committees as being primarily responsible for implementation of these decisions, with requisite support from other concerned stakeholders in the community. This is gradually expected to help evolve a democratic process, to determine an accountable school level structure in the form of these school committees.

Consequent to the training programmes, the School Committees have initiated processes to present the situation in their school to the concerned officials or departments by highlighting the aspects that need to be addressed on a priority basis. Arrangement of additional teachers to address issue of teacher shortage by approaching the BEO, mobilisation of local resources to provide for lack of infrastructural requirements (e.g. extra rooms and teaching-learning material) of the local school, and discussing children's learning as an integral part of all community meetings have been some of the initial outcomes.

The training programmes for the school committees have also facilitated addressal of issues like infrastructure, enrolment and retention and teacher-child ratio at a more macro (that is Gram Panchayat) level. Addressal of the aforementioned issues necessarily implies interfacing with the Gram Panchayat to effectively deal with the issues, a process which has helped build capacity of the school committee members to assume responsibilities and effect improvement in the local school.



## *democratic decentralisation*

### *- initiatives from the SDMCs*

J B Saragooru in H. D. Kote taluk, Mysore District, is a village of 1500 people of different communities, who are mainly dependent on agriculture for a livelihood. Though the village has a primary school that dates back to 1945 and an anganwadi, the community never took much interest in issues of education. Instances of school dropouts joining the child labour force were commonplace. The school itself was a three-room structure which catered to 250 children. One of these rooms was too dilapidated for use, with the result that classes were held under the trees.

The first process of Prajayatna was facilitated in this village in September 2002, a Gram Panchayat-level School Committee meeting which was attended by the School Committee members, more at the behest of their children rather than of their own accord. However, the realisation that it was their responsibility, as a community, to use their strength for the benefit of the school, was a learning from this meeting; an understanding that the School Committee members have embodied through their subsequent efforts.



An SDMC meeting alongwith the community in Mysore district.

The first step was to involve the school committee members in the functioning of the school and to create a working relationship among these members, the GP and the larger community. Problems of irregular attendance and poor infrastructure were identified. The teachers brought up the issue of attendance and the school committee agreed to do a follow-up while also ensuring that the children received their prescribed ration of rice. Gradually the attendance picked up with re-enrolment of dropouts fostered by the community's interest in getting children back to school.

The Gram Panchayat built a temporary fence for the school. The school committee approached the Taluk(Block) Panchayat for funds towards repair of the school building and after persistent follow-up efforts Rs.50,000 was sanctioned for repair and whitewash. Local resources were mobilised for construction of a classroom while the committee monitored the construction of a second room sanctioned by the Zilla(District) Panchayat. With the funds that were sanctioned to the school committee, the community decided to furnish the school its basic requirement for furniture. Inspired by these events, the 7th standard students went on a fund mobilisation drive and collected enough to purchase 6 chairs for the school.

The Gram Panchayat agreed to construct a proper compound wall for the school and so the school committee auctioned the temporary school fence to raise funds. Besides the infrastructural changes taking place in the village school the committee members have begun to encourage other community members to actively discuss and thereby decide the community's



approach to various school issues. The women members of the committee are very active and feel responsible for fostering new attitudes and setting an example in the village, such as educating their daughters beyond the primary level by sending them to schools outside the village which was previously not an acceptable practice. Besides organising regular parent meetings and maintaining proper accounts, the committee members have also started looking at aspects of learning with plans for a Physical Education (PE) teacher and Hindi teacher for the school.

No. of  
SDMC  
training  
programmes  
facilitated  
(till May  
2003) is 370

The people of Kurudihalli primary school, of Challakere Taluk, Chitradurga District, were forced to be content with a school name board and the sight of their children in the shabby building. The other usual requisites for a school, such as teachers, a playground and a drinking water facility were missing but the school functioned nevertheless.

Till the time when the school committee members attended the training. They returned to the village community and initiated discussions on the condition of the school. The community decided to take responsibility for improving the conditions in the school and issues began to be taken up one after the other. The school committee approached the UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) for support to construct a compound wall for the school as well as provision of a drinking water facility.

The villagers also decided to repair a classroom in the school (a mud construction built under the Operation Black Board project) which was in danger of collapsing. The committee members used their allocated funds to complete the task. Inspired by their own work, the community has decided to create a garden for the school.

### *Interventions with local self-governing bodies*

The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian constitution were expected to deepen the democratic foundations of the prevailing governance system in India. However, like in most cases, the question of decentralisation was addressed more as an alternative to an ineffectual centralised system, rather than as a need to establish sound institutional mechanisms that enable a local level engagement that is truly empowering; an empowerment that gradually builds the capacity of the community and does not relegate it at the discretion of a system that reinstates dependency mechanisms through its various processes and structures. However, this requires that capacities be built of functionaries and representatives of the institutions of local self-governance, to understand their role and powers and utilise the same in bringing about educational reform. Therefore to facilitate the functionaries and representatives to assume responsibility for and manage education at the local level, Prajayatna has been engaging with the institutions of local self-governance.

Interaction with members of local self-governing bodies-Gram Panchayats and Taluk Panchayats occur on a regular basis at the Shikshana Grama Sabhas, either at the meeting itself or during the presentation of the report on the outcomes of these sabhas and ensuing discussion with the members.



During these interactions, Prajayatna highlights the need of discussing school issues as an important agenda in the Gram Panchayat meetings and the need to address issues of budgetary allocation especially in terms of infrastructural needs in the school.

Prajayatna has also been organizing Taluk-level meetings of Presidents and Secretaries of all Gram Panchayats in the Taluk, since May, 2001. Prior to the Taluk-level meeting the participants are encouraged to take responsibility in small ways for e.g. in collecting data on the schools in their panchayat and outlining the problems confronted by the schools. To facilitate data basing of information, charts requiring to be periodically updated are provided to the Gram Panchayat Presidents to be displayed at their local office. The information in the chart helps them in understanding the needs of the schools in their panchayat while highlighting issues that need immediate attention.



Gram Panchayat President & Secretaries' workshop, Kanakapura taluk, Bangalore Rural district.

In the Taluk-level meeting with Gram Panchayat functionaries, a Taluk Report on the status of education in the taluk prepared by Prajayatna is presented to all the members and their response to the issues in the Report sought. The Report outlines issues relating to infrastructure, community initiatives, administration and those pertaining to children and teachers. Discussion on what is possible with the powers vested in the local self-government structures takes place. During the session the President and Secretary of a particular Gram Panchayat are enabled to discuss issues pertaining to the schools in their panchayat based on the information provided to them in the Taluk Report. Following the discussion they identify areas of priority where possible actions could be taken, and a decision is reached to explore the extent of follow-up on these areas in the subsequent meetings.

“There is a difference between the information provided by Prajayatna and that provided by the BEO. Prajayatna's information is correct. But the ZP asks for information provided by the BEO. It would be better if Prajayatna could interact with the BEO's office regarding their information so that we can work with authentic data”.

*GP Secretary, B T Siddalingappa, Uthangi GP, Huvina Hadagali Taluk, Bellary District*

“Information provided by Prajayatna in the meetings and the Gram Panchayat charts, have helped us while taking decisions in Grama Sabha meetings. This has in turn improved the relationship between the Panchayat and the school”.

*GP President - K. R. Jamadar and GP Secretary - B. V. Hiremath, Devarahipparagi GP, Sindagi Taluk, Bijapur District*



Consequent to the Taluk level training workshops, follow-up workshops are held at the Hobli level (comprising of an average of 10- 12 Gram Panchayats in a taluk). The **Hobli level workshop** enables effective discussion, planning and implementation as there are fewer number of Gram Panchayats. Information pertaining to enrolment, retention, facilities available, number of teachers, is provided in detail about all schools in each of the panchayat in the Hobli. Sharing of information about school development work carried out following the taluk level workshop takes place and a three-month plan to be followed up during the subsequent quarter is prepared and presented by representatives from each Gram Panchayat.

The Gram Panchayat members, during the normal course of their tenure, apart from viewing the school as buildings that require infrastructural facilities, do not see themselves responsible for any other issue like enrolment, learning levels, or teacher regularity. Initially, discussions in the workshops for Gram Panchayat Presidents and Secretaries revolve around non-availability of funds, even to address "high-priority" issues like roads and electricity. However, during the course of the meetings, discussions reinforce the importance of the local self government in addressing the situation of all schools in the panchayat. It is gradually being understood in such meetings, that the condition of schools reflects a community's insight or understanding of its educational requirements.

### *Information - enabling GPs*

"Before we never used to speak about education in the Gram Panchayat meetings. Our panchayat expenses used to be mostly on electricity, road, sanitation work and water. We never considered that education is within the purview of the panchayat. We are beginning to discuss school as an agenda in our meetings and have taken a decision to reserve 15% of our panchayat grants for issues concerning education"

*GP President, Shrisail Patil, Itagi GP, Basavanna Bagewadi Taluk, Bijapur District*

"The information provided by Prajayatna has been very useful. Before, we used to give more importance to drainage, street lights and water. Now through Prajayatna's meetings we know the status of schools in our panchayat and those in other Gram Panchayats. We have detailed information about the problems in the schools in our panchayat and can therefore prioritise issues. With this information we have approached the District Panchayat which has indicated what we can do next."

*GP member, Malandera Anjaneya, Kotte Malavadi GP, Hunsur Taluk, Mysore District*



## Accessing local resources

### - school improvement through the GP

"The Gram Panchayat has given Rs. 10,000 for GHPS repair in Bidaluru, Rs. 35,000 for constructing compound wall in Malegenahaali and Rs. 20,000 for repairs of Anganwadi in Anighatta, besides taking up other school infrastructure work."

*GP President, B Chikkanarayanasmamy, Bidaluru GP, Kasaba Hobli, Devenahalli Taluk, Bangalore Rural District*

"The Gram Panchayat appointed a Hindi teacher from Basavanahalli for Karimuddanahalli school and arranged an honorarium of Rs. 500 for the teacher. The panchayat has also made provisions for water and toilet facilities besides arranging the sanction of Rs. 1.5 lakhs for High School building in Karimuddanahalli."

*GP President, K. Venkatesh, Karimuddanahalli GP, Hunsur Taluk, Mysore District*

"Besides assuming personal responsibility for constructing a flagpole, we have made an application to the Taluk Panchayat for construction of compound walls in all schools in the Gram Panchayat. The panchayat has participated in programmes for re-enrolment of dropouts. Our contribution towards the cooked mid-day meal scheme has been in the form of construction of a room for the same purpose in the schools at Tippapura and Shivalinganahalli at a cost of Rs. 40,000 and Rs. 12,000 respectively while a similar room has been sanctioned at Devagondanahalli through the TP."

*GP President, Halappa, and GP member, Y. Mahabaleshwarappa, Devagondanahalli GP, Huvina Hadagali Taluk, Bellary District*

No. of Hobli level workshops with Gram Panchayat President and Secretaries (till May 2003) is 39

No. of Taluk level workshops with Gram Panchayat President and Secretaries (till May 2003) is 31

Increased knowledge and understanding of their role and powers have helped the Gram Panchayat members to make resolutions to enhance budgetary allocations for schools, take measures in the nature of: repair and renovation of school building, provide infrastructural facilities (school compound, water, toilets) and ensure enrolment of dropouts. Gram Panchayat members are also working to increase accountability of teachers and the functioning of schools. In Bangalore Rural District, for instance, issues confronting elementary education are gradually becoming a feature on the agenda of Taluk Panchayat meetings. Teacher regularity, reassignment of teachers, and status of infrastructure in schools are some of the issues often discussed.



## *Enhancing capacities amongst marginalised groups to participate in governance*

In the various activities of Prajayatna, it has often been perceived that though there is some involvement of people from the marginalised groups, the participation has been more because of focussed efforts to ensure the representation of these sections. It is observed that though they



Meeting in Gangalapur, Sandur Taluk, Bellary District.

attend various activities like the Shikshana Grama Sabhas, workshops for Gram Panchayat members, and school committee meetings, their participation and articulation has been very restricted and limited. Often it is because of their consistent alienation from community processes that are male and upper-caste dominated. It is also important to recognise that most of the children who are working or are school drop-outs belong to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities.

Prajayatna recognises the need to build capacities of marginalised groups to participate in school improvement and establish mechanisms that ensure an equitable representation from these groups in structures like the School committees. Experiences like the following, reinforce the need to integrate such processes for a more concerted effort to address issues like 'gender prejudice in representation', 'girls enrolment and retention', and 'gender discrimination in school'.

### *Example 1*

The school in Kondlahalli A .K Colony, Molkalamuru taluk, in Chitradurga District, caters to children from marginalised communities that comprise the village population. It was similar to the numerous other government schools in the State with a lack of basic amenities, large numbers of children, insufficient classrooms, no playground, and not surprisingly, a high rate of dropouts. The school committee members went to work immediately after attending the training programme at the panchayat level. They met the Zilla(district) Panchayat and presented their ideas for their school. Consequent to following up on processes, the District Panchayat sanctioned Rs 24,000 and the school was repaired. They then took their case to the Taluk Panchayat for the need of more classrooms. In this case too, the school committee members relentlessly followed

up by accessing relevant information and ensured the sanctioning of funds while one room was constructed under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyana.

The school committee mobilised the community and built a water tank with Rs. 5000 sanctioned by the Gram Panchayat. Further funds mobilised from within the community went towards construction of the school toilet. The school committee also realised the need to involve themselves in re-enrolment of dropouts and were successful in bringing back to school 10 children.

### *Example 2*

Nakaral Tanda is a small village of Banjaras (traditionally travelling nomads), set in the interior of the Hagari Bommanahalli Taluk in Bellary District, where even today, no bus goes. Agriculture is the mainstay of the villagers and



fishing supplements their earnings. Prior to Prajayatna starting work, nobody gave a thought to the lower primary school (till the 5th) in the village. There was a general apathy both from the parents as well as teachers. There was so little importance attached to the school that the villagers used the passage between classrooms and the playground as a public thoroughfare, with children forced to make way for any passing vehicle. Furthermore, the school building was often flooded after heavy rains.

A transfer brought a new teacher to the school and he raised the issue of the school's condition with the community and the Sevlal sangha members - a local community group. The meeting was organised in the school building and attended by many villagers. Matters were discussed and a decision to donate land for the school taken. But this was not followed up.

The work in the village began with the support of the teachers. The school information was collected and consequently a Shikshana Grama Sabha was organised. The issue of land for the school was again raised and a voluntary donor identified. However, the donor later retracted for personal reasons. During the follow-up to the Shikshana Grama Sabha, the community decided to find another donor and this time, the Sevlal sangha agreed to provide a corresponding sum of Rs. 63,000 for the land. The deal for the school land was finalised and the school became the focal point of interest in the village.

The Taluk Panchayat was approached for the construction of rooms. Two rooms were sanctioned and the people monitored the work to ensure quality. Another two rooms were sanctioned, which are under construction.

The school that previously saw an attendance of 25 children out of 90, transformed into a school that saw 131 enrolled with 100% attendance.

The teachers rose to the challenge of teaching the children in their native language by first learning the Lambani language themselves. This attracted even more children to the school.

The village now dreams of making their school a model for others and upgrading it to a Higher Primary school (till the 7th).

### *Example 3*

Beeraldini is a village in Basavana Bagewadi Taluk, Bijapur District. There are a number of Mahila Sanghas (women's groups) like Kittur Channamma swasahaya sangha, Parvathi Mahila swasahaya sangha, Saraswathi Mahila swasahaya sangha and Akka Mahadevi swasahaya sangha which are actively involved in community processes in this village. In the village, children of the pre-school age are sent to Balwadis called 'Thottila Mane' started by the Mahila sanghas instead of the Anganwadis (pre-school). These pre-schools observe timings which are convenient for working women.

A similar enthusiasm and participation was observed with respect to school processes consequent to initiation of Prajayatna's work in Beeraldinni. Mahila sangha members were encouraged to be a part of the then newly formed school committees, and have since then, as members of the SDMC, actively engaged with different issues concerning the school.

The school committee members have arranged for drinking water, school repairs and whitewash, and construction of school compound through the Gram Panchayat. The mahila sangha members are monitoring the implementation of the 'cooked mid-day meal' scheme and have also been endeavouring to set an example to others by sending their children regularly to school and by encouraging parents to observe their children's learning in school.



## *Policy and Advocacy*

Through its ongoing work, Prajayatna has found that there was a lack of a systemic framework that could integrate all actions, programmes and schemes of the government on elementary education. What exist are programmes and schemes formulated on political compulsions, resource availability, assumed expertise of a few educational functionaries, or donor pressure. Though the government has time and again initiated schemes and projects - Operation BlackBoard, District Primary Education Programme, - to address the question of universalisation of and quality in elementary education, these efforts have not been able to deliver as envisaged. Another central scheme Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan - introduced recently, is in its initial stages of implementation. Audit reports and evaluation of such projects and schemes, carried out by different organisations and individuals have periodically highlighted areas of concern, with lack of capacity for accurate monitoring and tracking of programme outcomes, centralisation of management, and absence of community involvement in programme implementation being oft repeated issues. But, even the evaluation and programme audits have not been able to identify the core issues of community ownership, in the sense that the agenda for change is driven by people and not just participation - which does not define who is in charge of the change process.

It is important to recognise that it is not only difficult but impractical for the government machinery to establish mechanisms to ensure its own accountability. Therefore it fails in evolving approaches or strategies which recognise the community as 'prioritisers and determinants' of issues that concern them rather than as 'users' of services designed by others. Consequently, structures and mechanisms instituted by the government, have reinforced absence of accountability and a lack of ownership of efforts at the local level.

In Prajayatna's understanding, influencing policy does not imply making cosmetic changes in archaic authoritative guidelines of schemes that have assumed the form of government policies. It is about mobilising community demand, action and self-organisation towards a collective vision on education as a community that could reflect itself in a people evolved policy. Intrinsic to this process of policy formulation is the articulation of people in the State - the elected representatives, members of local level civic institutions, teachers, educational administrators, community members across the various strata of society in villages and urban areas.

Conventionally, the understanding of people's articulation is limited to a process where communities provide the information sought by 'experts' who finally frame the policies. Through its ongoing processes, Prajayatna seeks to redefine 'expertise' in a manner that creates spaces for the experiences and opinions of people whose lives the social policies affect. Thus, there is an alternative interpretation of 'community needs' and with it, appropriate policy solutions. Furthermore, the nature of the processes ensure a representative framework that preclude opinions based only on 'dominant views' and incorporates articulations by providing information on the system and the role of the different players in a form that people understand, identify with and involve themselves in terms of local level action.



Concurrently, work is focussed towards institutionalising mechanisms that would translate a people-evolved policy into reality. This involves not merely administrative decentralisation, but an effort to engender a democratic process evolved and determined by the community whereby they can engage other stakeholders (like the bureaucracy and the Panchayat Raj Institutions) and make them accountable not just as a demand, but by involving themselves in the improvement or change. This in turn implies the necessity to establish mechanisms, that enable a dialogue between different stakeholders at different levels (from the village school level to the village, block and district panchayat and State). This would further help them to articulate their needs, prioritise their concerns, assume responsibility to effect plans and leverage their strengths for mutually beneficial outcomes. Simultaneously, processes should be facilitated that seamlessly integrate and consolidate the efforts and outcomes from each level to the next to generate a collective reform agenda.



A meeting of Gram Panchayats, SDMCs and cluster resource co-ordinators in Indi taluk, Bijapur District.

Issues arising from the ongoing work, have served as the basis for advocacy at the State level. An endeavour to draw attention to the importance of addressing the issue of quality, in the process of universalisation of elementary education saw Prajayatna organize a State level Public Debate on 'Quality in Elementary Education towards Universalisation' along with the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Government of Karnataka in December 2000. An important outcome of this workshop was the necessity to relook at the incentive scheme such as that of rice distributions in terms of its efficacy.

The advocacy centering around the mid-day cooked meal scheme in Karnataka after the Quality Workshop has seen the scheme being introduced as part of a special educational support package for the educationally most backward North-Eastern districts of Karnataka. However, a lot remains to be done with regard to the extent of coverage and the process of administering the scheme as it is being implemented at present.

Involving the Gram Panchayat President and Secretaries, both in terms of evolving collaborative structures with the school committees, as well as enabling them towards more efficient utilisation of panchayat funds for schools, was a concern which was reflected by Prajayatna during the course of a meeting with the Commissioner for Public Instruction in 2002. Further meetings with the Department of Education and their recognition of the concern led to 'Sankalpa' - a State level training workshop for Presidents and Secretaries of both Gram Panchayats and School committees in 18 districts - conducted by Prajayatna. The workshops, in addition to building capacities of the decentralised institutions towards educational governance, sought to train Block Resource Coordinators (BRCs), Block Resource Persons (BRPs), and Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs), Educational Co-ordinators and faculty members from the DIET as Master Resource Persons who could take up subsequent training processes.



**Sankalpa - intervention with local self governing bodies** have seen information sharing, discussions, planning processes and presentation of action plans jointly by Gram Panchayat and school committee functionaries. These workshops, it is believed, will help to create constructive linkages between the two decentralised institutions - Gram Panchayats and School Development and Monitoring Committees - that will strengthen aspects of local educational governance like identification and prioritisation of school issues and resource sharing to effect change.

A training manual was also prepared by Prajayatna, addressing aspects like the context of the Panchayat Raj system in a decentralised governance framework, the village panchayat as an effective linkage between different structures - the district, the block, the community and the education department. The manual, also highlighting the and the role and responsibilities of the Gram Panchayat and school committees in educational reform, was disseminated amongst the workshop participants through the education department prior to the facilitation of the Sankalpa workshop in the identified Taluk.



Participants at the Sankalpa workshop.  
Madikeri taluk, Kodagu district.

The Principal of the 6 CTE (College for Teachers' Education) across the state assumed responsibility for logistical requirements of the workshops spread across the 18 districts. The workshops also witnessed the attendance of the TP President, other block level panchayat members and the EO (Executive Officer) of the taluk in some places.

Approximately 600 Gram Panchayat's, 600 SDMC and CRCs, BRCs, BEOs, across 18 Taluks in 18 districts have participated in the workshop.

Initial discussions in the workshop, focused on building the context around who assumes primary responsibility for the school and how mutual accountability of the community and the government can ensure this. Thereafter, the dialogue moved on to the issue of the Gram Panchayat's role in school development. Interesting and insightful reflections were evident during this part of the discussion:

According to some panchayat secretaries in Soraba taluk (Shimoga District), there was no need of the Gram Panchayat to play a role with respect to school issues as the SDMC (school committee) structure was already present.

A village panchayat president from Lingasagur taluk (Raichur District) said that it was difficult for the Gram Panchayat to do anything without proper information; only if the SDMC could provide complete information on the schools would the Gram Panchayat be able to take some action.

In the Nagamangala workshop (Mandya District) an SDMC president said - "Gram Panchayat is a system through which one can reach out, but without people's efforts nothing can be done."

According to a Gram Panchayat president from Dharwad Rural (Dharwad District) - "Gram Panchayat should work to enrol children who have dropped out and towards school repairs. If there is a district or state plan for the school it would not reflect village problems. So, Gram Panchayat should take responsibility for the local schools."

Other issues that formed a part of the day-long workshops were, specific school issues like land, inadequate teachers, low levels of retention, and school infrastructure; as well as larger socio-economic,



political issues like migration, influence of teachers' unions, proliferation of private schools, and political influence.

At each Sankalpa workshop, decisions were taken by the participants within the context of a three-month action plan for the schools. Different school issues were addressed in the plan for which the panchayats and school committees assumed joint responsibility. Apportionment of Gram Panchayat budget for school development activities, regular meetings with school committees to discuss school issues and leveraging support of Prajayatna for ongoing work, were some of the decisions common across the workshops.

### *responses of the bureaucracy*

The specific nature of the partnership that Prajayatna is seeking to facilitate amongst different stakeholders - specially decentralised bodies - and the educational bureaucracy, is more often than not interpreted within the context of the dynamics of the existing educational system by the educational functionaries themselves. But, there are places where the bureaucracy has responded positively to ongoing efforts from the community. The following responses provide an insight into how the work is perceived, by some of the educational administrators in the districts in which Prajayatna is working at present:

“The importance of involving the parents, the school committees and the Gram Panchayat in the process of education is reflected in Prajayatna's work. It is only through such support that children's learning can be improved.”

C. Nandish, Block Resource Coordinator and H. Rudrappa, Block Resource Person, Neelamangala Taluk, Bangalore Rural

“Teachers in my cluster have told me about the Shikshana Grama Sabha conducted by Prajayatna, about the discussions and peoples' participation in these meetings. This is a surprise for me as people do not attend meetings called by our teachers and others in the education department.”

Sangappa, Block Resource Person, Mysore Urban, Mysore

“Sharing of information by Prajayatna has been useful in understanding the different problems and responding to queries on information from structures like the District Panchayat. Through its ongoing work of data basing, Prajayatna has information that supports in identifying dropouts for Chinnara Angala, monitoring use of money from SSA, and auditing government schemes. This is not possible from the department as it becomes difficult for us to share issues at higher levels.”

Nagaraju, Education Coordinator, North-1, Bangalore Urban

“Prajayatna's support is required for government programmes. As Prajayatna works at the village level, it is necessary to discuss programmes like the Chinnara Angala with Prajayatna and plan to tackle the issue of migration with them as children who come for Chinnara Angala are not coming to school.”

Andanappa M Vadageri, BEO, Hagaribommanahalli, Bellary

“We came to know that 50% children are dropouts in Kannolli through information provided by Prajayatna. Also the Block Education Officer came to know of single teacher schools based on reports compiled by Prajayatna. Additionally he gave directions for the appointment of more teachers to these schools.”

Donur M H, DPEP deputy co-ordinator, Bijapur



## *Learning* networks

The process to build an information and resource base on elementary education, that would be made accessible to interested citizens, has led to the establishing of a Documentation Unit in Prajayatna. Experiences and learning on different aspects of reform in elementary education, both from Prajayatna's work and that of other initiatives is collated at the Documentation Unit for sharing the same with all concerned citizens.

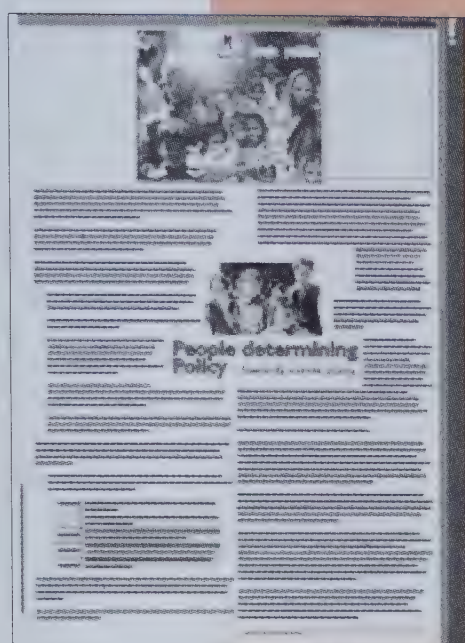
The Documentation Unit is envisaged as a place that creates a discussion space for interested people to meet and share their experiences and information on development issues, related to child rights, education, and local governance. At present, it houses a collection of books, articles, video and audio material and is amenable to providing access to requisite information through web-links, establishment of contacts with resource persons and academia and linkages with specific institutions and media.

The Shikshana Grama Sabha film, capturing the process and impact of the same mechanism to elicit community participation, was a product of the efforts of the Documentation Unit. The film brought out in July 2001, has been circulated and shared with concerned citizens and agencies at both the national and international level. The quarterly Newsletter - Prajayatna - is also conceptualised, composed and published by the Documentation Unit.

At present, the information available is being used by volunteers, interested individuals, other NGOs, researchers, district staff of Prajayatna and the other staff of MAYA.



# Prajayatna Newsletter



Intending to provide relevant information that will advocate for a larger discussion on the status of education and policy in Karnataka, a bilingual (Kannada and English) newsletter "Prajayatna" is brought out every quarter. The first issue was brought out in July 1999. The newsletter carries articles on educational practice at the macro and micro level and with reference to specific schools in various districts, educational research, book reviews and opinions of different people on matters of educational practice and reform. It also provides information on any new structures introduced by the Government, innovative methodologies in learning, experiences of teachers and ongoing activities of the programme.. The newsletter goes out to over 20000 people. In the six districts where the programme is operational, it reaches out to all the government schools (teachers), the education officers in the 36 taluks and wards in the Nagarpalikas and all the Gram Panchayat Presidents and Secretaries. It also goes out to all the DDPIs in the 27 districts, libraries, NGOs and individual subscribers. Until date, eight editions of the newsletter have been produced.

The newsletter has opened up avenues for sharing information with regard to status of education in other districts. It has also provided an opportunity for the teachers, children and the community to understand, learn and reflect from experiences of other schools and communities in addressing issues of accountability, community ownership, infrastructural development, and innovative methodologies that have improved learning levels of children and thereby enrolment and retention.



The *Impact Assessment Study* for Prajayatna, carried out over the period December 2002 to January 2003, is an attempt to document the efforts initiated by the communities across the six districts. The study itself is not meant to quantify improvement but to reflect an empowerment process engendered and realised through the community - based work towards school reform.

### *Objectives of the Impact Assessment Study*

#### *Internal Feedback on programme*

In the context of any community based programme where directions and strategies are defined through a cyclic process of planning, implementation and reflection, there is a continuous need to review the ongoing work. The objective of such a review is however not restricted to a narrow construct like the 'efficacy of internal information and monitoring systems'. The need to take review beyond the realm of methodology, into that of organisational change and institutional learning for a transformative development of not only programmes, but also team members involved in effecting these programmes, is a perspective that has always informed MAYA's work.

The Impact Assessment Survey was therefore conceptualised to provide internal feedback in terms of:

- Efficacy of activities and processes
- Inputs to review and re-strategise ongoing efforts
- Critical information pertaining to areas of concern to develop more focused interventions

#### *Policy Feedback to the concerned government departments*

Through the various processes, it has been recognised, that any educational reform process entails a more holistic concept of partnerships with various stakeholders at different levels. Liasing and forming partnerships with and between the government, educational administrators, parents, teachers, the private sector, and other relevant institutions to enhance reach, improve capacity and ensure quality, with each partner leveraging the strength of the other stakeholders, have been integral to the processes.

The objective of sharing experiences and information at various levels has seen active participation in meetings with stakeholders from the elected bodies and bureaucracy : members of the Standing Committee for Health and Education at the District Panchayat level, members of the District Implementation Committee for Education, the taluk level administrative machinery (Executive Officer), the Commissioner for Public Instruction (CPI), the Deputy Directors for Public Instruction (DDPIs), the Chief Executive Officers (District level), Block Education Officers (BEOs), Education Coordinators (Circle level), Block Resource Persons (BRPs), Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators (CRCs), and the functionaries from the Department of Labour, Women and Child Development and Social Welfare.



Collation, analysis, and sharing of findings from the Impact Assessment Survey with administrators at different levels is not only expected to serve as a feedback, on the efficacy and relevance of the present elementary education system to the educational bureaucracy, but also as an expeditious process to initiate local level action (whether through the community itself or through a demand for more accountability from existing structures) thereby leading to better governance.

### *Sharing outcomes with different stakeholders*

The efforts to partner with different stakeholders in the societal system is based on the understanding that individual entities - governments, nonprofits, businesses, academic institutions, individuals - which traditionally acted independent of one another, can create powerful synergies when working together.

The partnership efforts are directed towards building on shared or complementary strengths of all the partners in the developmental process and involve one or more of the following activities- information exchange, research, support towards resource generation, voluntarism in diverse forms and collaborative associations to influence policy. All such relationships are in turn governed by the programme's overall objective - to work towards enabling communities.

Working with the experience, that any community directed development effort is basically an endogenous process by which people themselves assume responsibility, all efforts at partnering are looked upon as mechanisms building on Prajayatna's existing processes towards empowering the community. One must understand, that enabling an alienated community in development efforts is an inherently evolutionary process allowing for a continuous cycle of observing, doing and learning. It is in this process of trying to engage with social realities that there is progression from passivity to activity in managing their own resources, defining their needs, goals and aspirations, and making decisions affecting their well being and sustainable development.



A sharing meeting in Kondaguli GP, Sindagi Taluk, Bijapur district.

Accordingly, the outcomes of the Impact Assessment Survey with different stakeholders would be shared to:

- Enable local self-government and civic institutions to reflect on and leverage learning experiences from amongst their own efforts.
- Build a larger critical discussion on the need to strengthen processes of community governance in education.



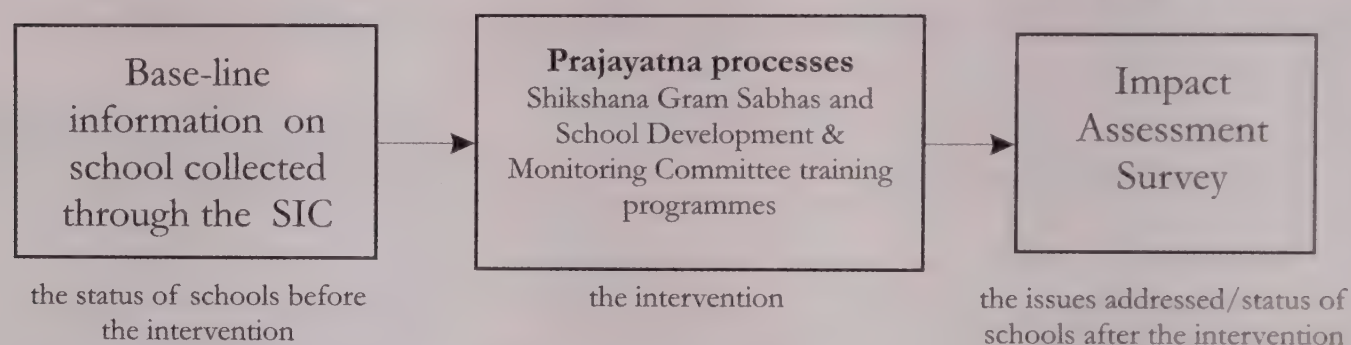
## Design and Methodology of the Impact Assessment Survey

The Impact Assessment Survey covered:

- 2102 schools reached out to across the six districts, through village-level meetings on education- the Shikshana Grama Sabhas and/or through the Gram Panchayat level training programmes for the School Development and Monitoring Committees.

### Methodology

A simple diagrammatic representation of the Assessment Design is given below:



*(For further details refer Annexure)*

### Survey findings

While the following section seeks to provide a detailed insight into the findings from the Impact Assessment Survey, it is in no way exhaustive. An attempt has been made to collate and present the findings so as to reflect the nature and intent of the ongoing work towards educational reform and the learning that defines that work:

#### The role of information and enabling mechanisms

From the School Information Campaign fact sheet to Gram Panchayat level charts for SDMCs, information on issues has been a necessary element in initiating a discussion at each and every forum - be it the Shikshana Grama Sabha or a Taluk-level workshop with panchayat functionaries.

This understanding, of the critical role of information, evolved from Prajayatna's experience of the effect of inadequate and unreliable information that has prevented interest and participation of the people in school affairs. Compounding this are discrepancies in departmental statistics and inaccessibility to authentic information at various levels.



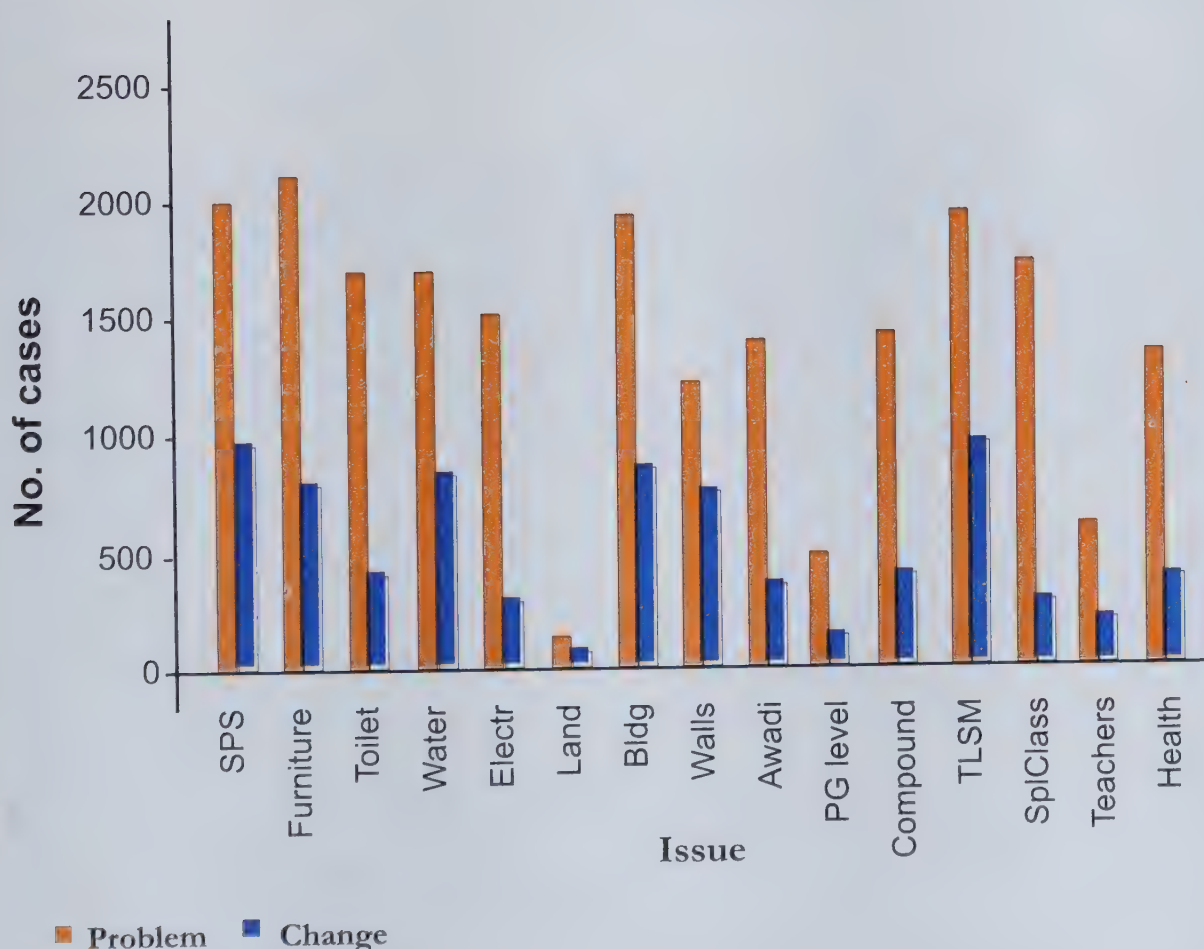
As a consequence, lack of an understanding of the educational system, absence of information pertaining to roles and responsibilities of decentralised school management structures, and lack of data on budgetary allocations and their utilisation, perpetrate an educational system characterised by a lack of transparency - political, administrative, financial - contributing to poor governance.

Incorporation of processes and mechanisms, to enable people develop an understanding of how the system works - to make it deliver - and provide information in a manner so that people can better perceive their roles, responsibilities and determine their educational priorities, therefore form an integral component of the work.

Findings from the Impact Assessment Survey, also underscore this role of information as a key determinant towards eliciting participation and active involvement in the educational reform process. The survey indicates significant improvements that have been effected in both absolute and percentage terms with respect to every issue identified as a concern during the School Information Campaign. (Refer Graph i)

*The table below indicates the Change as a % of the Problem*

**Graph i**



Issue	% Change
SPS	48%
Furniture	37%
Toilet	22%
Water	48%
Electr	17%
Land	39%
Bldg	44%
Walls	60%
Awadi	25%
PG level	27%
Cmpnd	27%
TLSM	49%
SplClass	16%
Teachers	32%
Health	28%

Notes:  
 TLSM = Teaching Learning Sports Materials  
 SPS = School Physical Surroundings  
 Bldg = Building  
 Awadi = Anganwadi  
 Electr = Electricity  
 Cmpnd = Compound

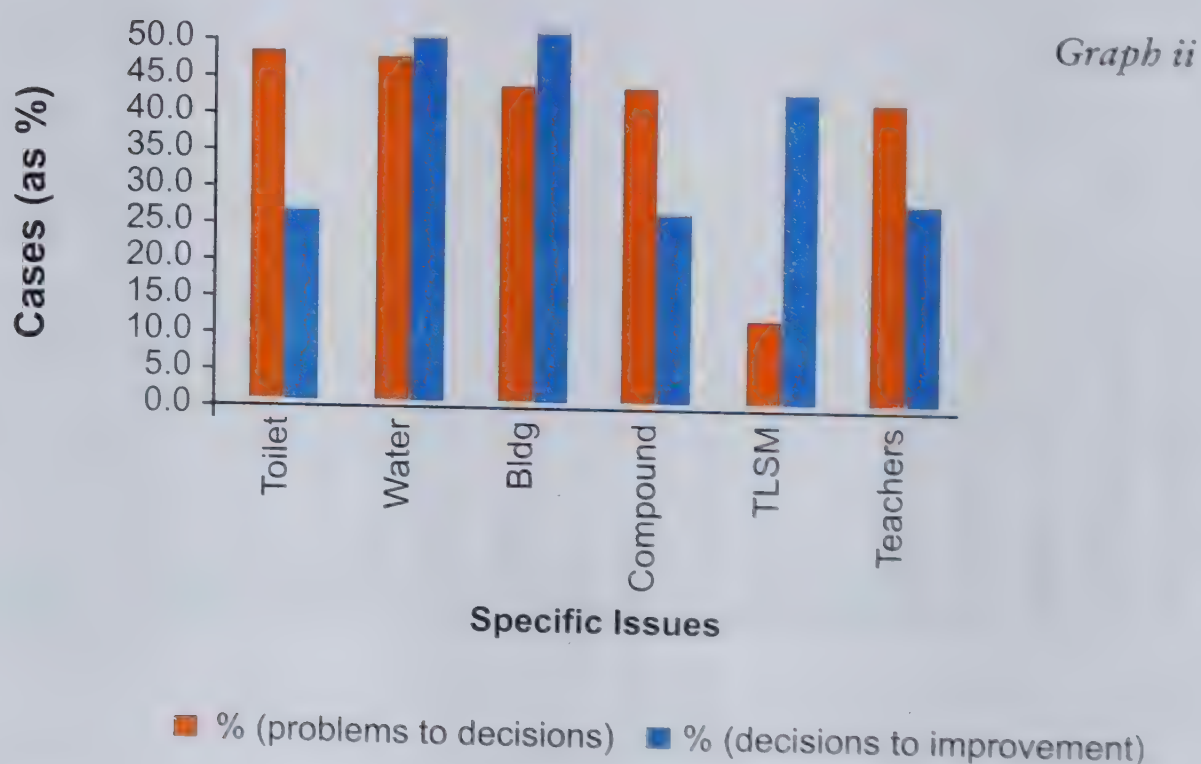
*The graph shows the changes effected with respect to the different issues identified as Problems in the SIC*

Findings, such as the above, contend that information is a key resource that determines local-level change and therefore the importance of designing and implementing impact-driven information systems. However,

such an understanding does not preclude attaching necessary caution to aspects like relevance, dialogue and sense-making associated with information that facilitate communities and institutions (like the school committees and Gram Panchayats) to interpret and use information as an enabling tool towards change. Therefore, the presentation of information through instruments that support understanding and decision-making, the alignment of this presentation with processes that build dialogue between different stakeholders, and the sharing of ongoing work and its outcomes with concerned officials and functionaries, are important components of the work. These help evolve an ownership of the information and its connotations by the community which is absent when information is regarded only as an externally determined 'given' provided by 'experts'.

In this context, the effectiveness of the Shikshana Grama Sabha as a mechanism that involves communities through information and experiences where they assume responsibility, is also corroborated by the Impact Assessment Survey. (Refer: Graph: ii)

*Translation of problems to decisions and decisions to improvement (as %) for a diverse range of issues consequent to the Shikshana Grama Sabha (village level meeting on education)*



Notes:

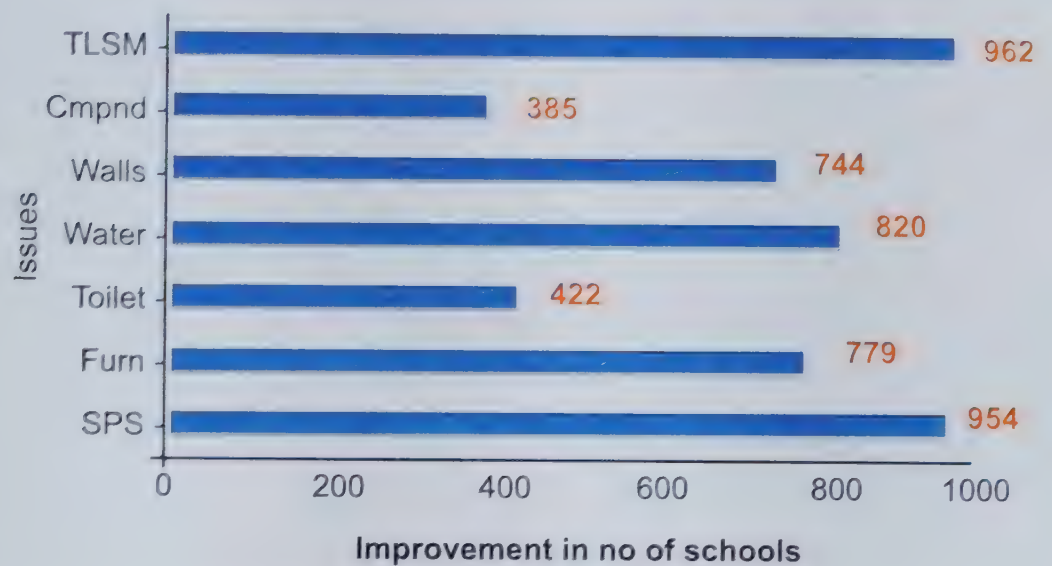
TLSM=Teaching Learning Sports Materials, Bldg=Building, Furn= Furniture, Cmpnd=Compound, SPS=School Physical Surrounding



Though initial reform efforts from the community have naturally been directed towards more immediate and tangible issues like infrastructure (Refer: Graph ii a), discussions at the different meetings have shown that concern with issues of 'learning' and 'governance' are also present. Prajayatna envisions that communities will be gradually enabled to identify systemic issues, that transcend immediate tangible concerns and require concerted efforts across different levels of governance, from the local to the state.

**Graph ii a**

*Number of schools in which Improvement with respect to different infrastructure issues has been effected*



## Articulations on learning and governance

### *Issues of Learning and Governance*

“People have become attentive after the village meeting and the parents are enquiring about the learning levels of the children from the teachers. This has helped increase our efficiency.”

B.B. Hiregond, Head Mistress , Muddapur village, Basavana Bagewadi Taluk, Bijapur

“We keep in mind information provided through Prajayatna's newsletter and taluk reports when working with teachers and other department officials. The community has started visiting the different departments and discussing school problems after Prajayatna meetings. They come with specific issues and concerns like provision for teachers and infrastructure facilities.”

Kotresh, Block Resource Coordinator, Hagari Bommanahalli, Bellary

“People are coming in a group and asking for time-bound solutions to the school problems. Applications have been made by them. In panchayat meetings, members are discussing these.”

Vijayakumar, Chikkamuduwadi Gram Panchayat Secretary, Kanakapura Taluk, Bangalore Rural District

## Enabling civic institutions and mechanisms to effect local level direct democracy

The issue of governance in educational reform and the associated concept of decentralisation have been integral to the work of Prajayatna. The very vision - 'To facilitate a systemic change in the existing educational model through institutionalising processes of community ownership that would effect structures, practices and policy of elementary education in Karnataka' - has taken shape from its experiences with strategies that have gradually evolved from linear approaches of enrolment, to a more systemic understanding of the issue of educational reform within a framework of community participation that necessarily includes the question of governance.

Inextricably linked to the perspective on educational governance of Prajayatna, is its approach towards measures of governance - mainly power and access to resources - as exists in a socio-cultural-political terrain that is inherently heterogeneous and manifest in a complex combinatorial influence of the measures distributed inequitably across different sections of stakeholders.

Given the existing inequalities in the social and political structure, it is believed that processes to establish a basis for articulation of diverse opinions of different stakeholders, endowed with different capacities at a given point in time along with a mechanism for negotiation and mediation, would be the paradigm within which issues of power can be addressed. Likewise, the question of accessibility to resources, whether in terms of influence over the dissemination of resources from central or local statal structures or in terms of capacities to mobilise resources, cannot be only one of efficiency of distribution which is generally proposed as a compelling argument for decentralisation. The issue again is about groups endowed with different levels of access to resources and therefore the necessity to have institutional mechanisms for a more participatory resource distribution process.

Working towards realising an educational governance paradigm as outlined above, it is recognised that there is a need to abstract from the notion of a statal governance framework - the exclusivity of the state (whether it be experts, elected representatives, or a technically and managerially competent bureaucracy). However such an abstraction is not a proposition of a lesser role for the State in the social arena, but engendering of a concept of governance that encompasses both the state and the larger civil society including civic institutions like the school committees through which direct engagement with school processes can be realised for the larger community.

As already mentioned, the school committees have emerged as a prospective institution to effectively address school related issues at the local level. The range of issues addressed by these committees and their efforts to mobilise local resources (Refer: Graph



iv & Table iv) in the form of local collection drive, personal contributions, and approaching neighbouring industrial units/corporate bodies, amply demonstrate that representative democracy and

**Table iv : Resources mobilised by the SDMCs - Issue-wise**

Issue	No of SDMC groups	Resources mobilised (Rs.)
SPS	151	259,635
FurnChild	51	293,125
FurnTeach	138	167,675
Toilet	31	138,950
Water	141	83,795
Electr	66	93,560
Land	7	142,000
Bldg	48	982,940
Walls	273	898,780
Awadi	4	17,350
PG	14	99,900
Cmpnd	41	495,130
TLSM	103	185,466
SplClass	1	300
Teachers	11	4,300
Health	10	1,880
<b>Total resources mobilised</b>		<b>3,864,786</b>

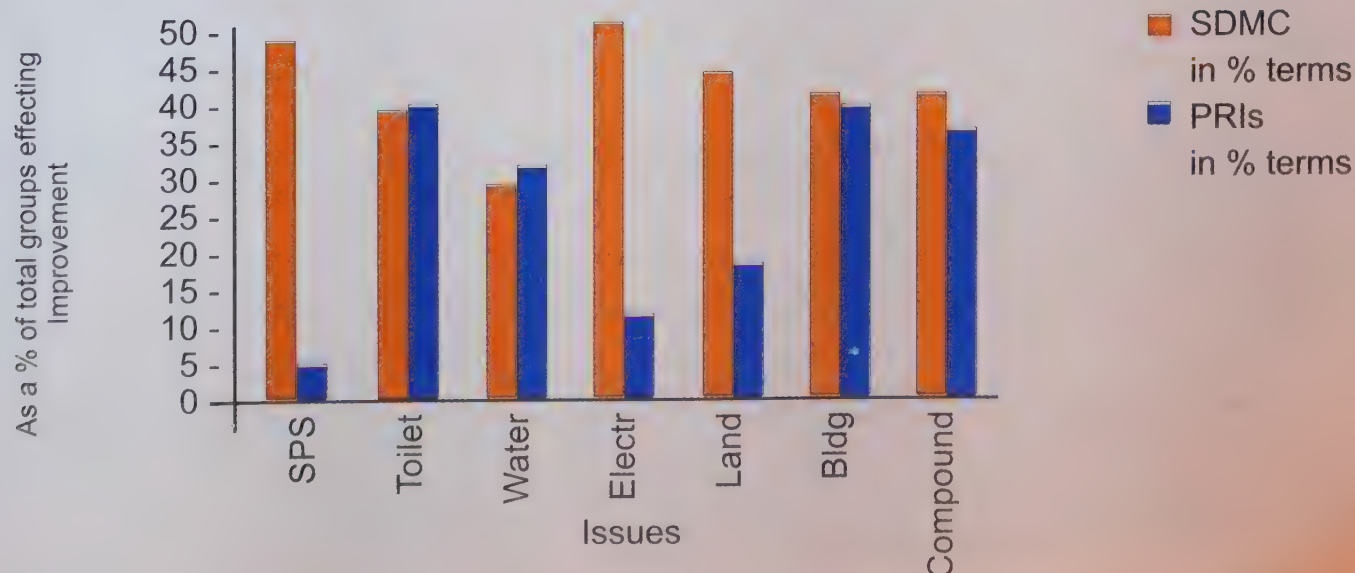
participatory democracy need not be mutually exclusive opposites, but complementary with strong synergistic effects.

*Comparison in absolute terms of initiatives taken by the SDMC and the PRIs (ZP, TP & Gram Panchayat) with respect to specific Issues*

Issues	SDMC	PRI's
SPS	879	86
Toilet	124	126
Water	367	402
Electr	122	27
Land	29	12
Bldg	426	412
Cmpnd	156	139

*Comparison of initiatives taken by the SDMC and the PRIs (ZP, TP & Gram Panchayat) with respect to Specific Issues*

**Graph iv**



The vertical axis indicates the initiatives of the SDMCs and the PRIs as a % of the different groups which have taken an initiative with respect to the issue in question

### *different initiatives undertaken by the school committees*

Though the main occupation of the people from the village of Somalapura, Yashawanthnagara Gram Panchayat, Sandur Taluk in Bellary District is agriculture, very few have their own land and a substantial number also go for work in the nearby manganese mines. Among the economically underprivileged, people have been concerned more about earning their two meals a day rather than education for their children. Though the local primary school(1-5) started in 1981, villagers had little information on the number of class-rooms or teachers in the school. However this gradually began to change after the appointment of two new highly motivated teachers who started sharing information on school processes with the community.

The Gram Panchayat-level school committee training programme in July, 2002 was attended by all school committee members from Somalapura. The school committee has taken initiative and provided for toilet, drinking water facility and a room for preparing the cooked mid-day meals in the school. Efforts towards school improvement is noticeable in the rise in school attendance from an average of 40 previously to the present figure of 60.

Resources mobilised by the school committee from the community as well as donors has seen the purchase of a sound system and decorative lamps which are rented out for village functions and the money used for school development work. "It is not only the school committee, but the Gram Panchayat member, the school teachers and the villagers themselves who have come together for a common purpose" - says Shivappa a villager from Somalapura.

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Yet another school that lacked basic infrastructure. The Higher primary school in Kadleguddu, Bommanahalli Gram Panchayat, Chitradurga Taluk, Chitradurga District lacked adequate number of rooms and the existing rooms were inhabitable during the rains. The playground could not be used due to large boulders occupying the space.

The school committee members mobilised funds for school repairs from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyana and approached and obtained sanction for extra rooms from the Taluk Panchayat. When the money for school repairs was found to be insufficient for the required work, the community contributed voluntary labour time to help construct a blackboard and clear the playground. The school committee has also approached local entrepreneurs and other social organisations to mobilise resources for sports equipment, furniture and construction of the school compound wall.

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In the village of Lakshmisagara, Chandapura Gram Panchayat, Anekal Taluk, Bangalore Urban District, the brick -making industry was the centre of life since it provided employment to most of the villagers. The community itself was divided along political lines and this affected life in the village.

When a school committee meeting was organised in Chandapura, it was found that many of the children in Lakshmisagara village were employed in the brick factories. The school committee president confirmed that more than 50 children were working there. It was decided that the school committee and the Gram Panchayat would meet to find a way to re-enrol these children to school.

It was suggested that the brick factory owners be invited for a meeting. In the meeting, the factory owners denied that children in the 6-12 age group were employed but had to accept the fact, when the village elders decided to confront the parents of the children for confirmation of the same. The factory owners defended themselves with the excuse that it was the parents who send their children to work and that it was not their fault.

A visit was made to all the factories by the school committee members. Many children were found even in those that denied employing child labour. Children reported ages which were more than what they were. With the help of the school records and an assessment of their physical development, the ages of these children were established and a list of all the children below 14 years was made.

Through the initiative of the school committee, the Headmaster assumed responsibility for re-enrolling the children back to school while the Cluster Resource Person took up the responsibility of distributing identity cards to the 15 children re-enrolled to school.



That the SDMC can be an effective decentralised school management institution, is gradually becoming evident from their efforts and initiatives with respect to local school issues and the primacy being given to this structure by the education department for implementation of programmes like the 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan', 'Chinnara Angala' and 'Ba Marali Shalege'. However, the transient nature of these structures - with a tenure of three years, the proclivity of such structures being reverted by a government decree as well as of their being afflicted by problems of accountability, make it imperative to ensure that a structure like the school committee is collectively responsible to and representative of the aspirations of a wider citizenry, in terms of their requirements and vision pertaining to the school.

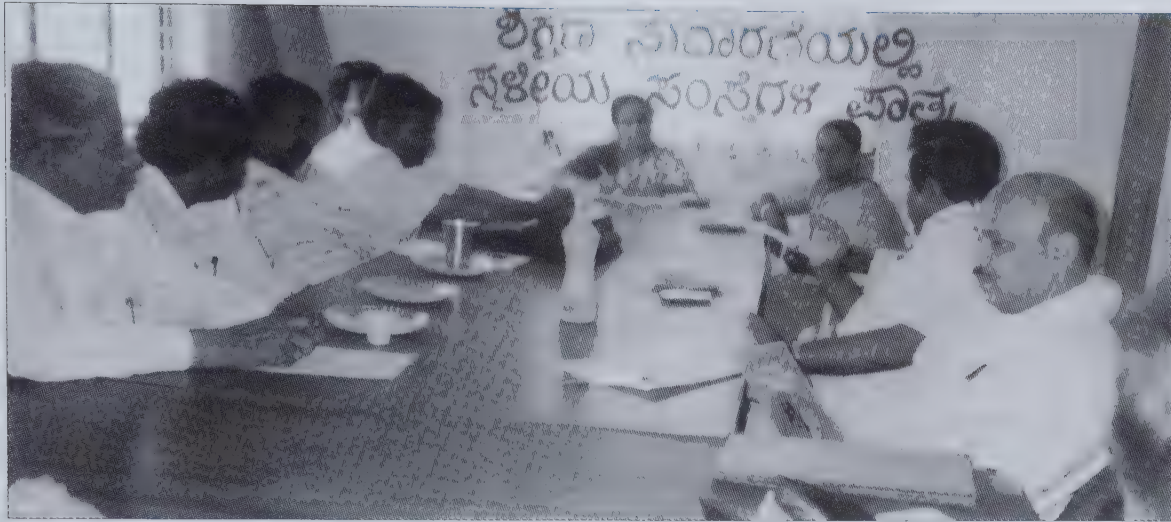
Consequently, at present the school committee training programme for a particular school is being facilitated within the context of the Shikshana Grama Sabha (village level meeting on education) instead of the Gram Panchayat level training workshops that was previously being conducted towards enabling these decentralised civic institutions. The spirit of the sabha is retained in terms of a forum for the larger village community, to participate in and engage with the local school processes. However, clarifying the roles, responsibilities of the school committees within the context of the larger village community, ensures a means of accountability of these committees towards the larger community as well as an understanding of its role as a representative structure. It is also envisaged, that the school committees would periodically update information pertaining to the local school and instil a sustainable ongoing process of data collection, collation and analysis at the local level. They would also be enabled to work towards sustaining the Shikshana Grama Sabha, as a simple and powerful means for mobilising local communities to initiate action for education reform at the local level.

### **Enabling local governance structures**

The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution hold immense potential in enabling the local community to manage education. But, what has stifled the emergent democratic institutions conceived through the Panchayat Raj structure more than anything else is the absence of political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation with at best a marginalised, consultative role for the functionaries of the local-self-governance bodies. Furthermore, the absence of accountability mechanisms of the local level structures towards the larger community, imply a reinforcement of existing dominant power structures at the local level and instances of misuse of resources and powers that are reminiscent of the larger political and administrative machinery.

Prajayatna's processes with the local governance structures have therefore, focussed on involving the Gram Panchayat elected representatives and functionaries in ongoing work pertaining to the school, both in terms of facilitating collaborative structures with the school committees as well as enabling them towards more efficient utilisation of Gram Panchayat funds for educational purposes.





Hobli meeting of Gram Panchayat representatives, educational functionaries at Begur Hobli, Bangalore Urban.

The issues that have assumed primary importance in the workshops with the Gram Panchayats at different levels have been regarding:

- the Gram Panchayat being an effective linkage between the local village level school and the taluk level educational administration,
- the Gram Panchayat, acting as an effective forum for prioritising issues, planning for schools, and school resource sharing at the panchayat level, and
- the importance of decentralised process of educational governance involving the three major stakeholders - the school committee, the Gram Panchayat and the education department.

The above processes as well as the work with the school committees, ensure that mutual accountability mechanisms are established at the local level - between the school committees and the Gram Panchayats - and a movement is initiated to enable the structures to leverage each other's support to effect school improvement. It may be observed that these are only preliminary steps towards a mechanism to impact a people evolved plan and policy.

Though the Impact Assessment Survey outlines specific tasks that have been taken up by the Panchayat Raj Institutions consequent to Prajayatna processes (Refer: Graph v and Table: v), the improved alliance between the structures of local self-governance and the other stakeholders - the school committees, the community, the education department - has been the most significant outcome. This has the possibility of facilitating higher levels of participation and commitment to reform from the different local level civic institutions.

### Graph v

*Initiatives taken by the Gram Panchayat with respect to specific issues*



Notes:

TLSM=Teaching Learning Sports Materials, SPS = School Physical Surrounding, Bldg=Building, Awadi=Anganwadi Electr=Electricity, Cmpnd=Compound (the number at the head of the bar indicates the number of schools)

*Initiatives taken by the Zilla Panchayat & Taluk Panchayat with respect to specific issues*



Issue	No of ZP groups	Resources mobilised (Rs.)	No of TP groups	Resources mobilised (Rs.)	No of GP groups	Resources mobilised (Rs.)
SPS	4	13,000	8	30,800	52	160,870
FurnChild	4	27,250	0	-	4	18,400
FurnTeach	4	35,900	2	4,200	6	8,050
Toilet	29	1,338,147	15	426,000	88	20,873,200
Water	27	284,100	8	27,750	144	473,350
Electr	4	9,000	1	1,500	42	82,950
Land	0	-	3	92,500	5	96,000
Bldg	202	20,707,911	107	6,973,670	139	6,715,886
Walls	20	527,400	15	90,600	43	262,250
Awadi	28	2,405,000	54	4,346,000	59	3,381,700
PG	3	34,000	2	40,000	14	170,700
Cmpnd	39	2,680,207	22	1,350,910	103	2,651,000
TLMS	9	38,700	1	600	11	17,100
SplClass	0	-	0	-	0	-
Teachers	1	800	0	-	0	-
Health	0	-	0	-	1	150
<b>Total</b>		<b>28,101,415</b>		<b>13,384,530</b>		<b>34,911,606</b>



## Effecting policy

For Prajayatna, influencing policy and practice entails a redefinition of social citizenship that goes beyond the paternalistic versions of the welfare state and includes not just concepts of social rights but also of social accountability through direct forms of democratic governance. The basic premise of this approach to policy is to regard citizens and communities not merely as users and consumers but as decision-makers and equal partners who engage in shaping policy decisions. The primary onus, however, of providing civic services still rests with the State. The work with the communities, therefore, focuses on capacity-building to articulate their needs, evolving mechanisms for communities and the State to interact, and institutionalising these mechanisms to ensure a sustained process of community partnership in policy formulation and practice.

This in turn involves engendering various levels of participation:

- supporting communities to access basic educational and school-related amenities as their right from the local self-governing bodies and the education department,
- supporting communities to engage with school processes and provide for locally viable school facilities through their own self-initiative,
- working with the Government to make institutional changes that provide for mechanisms of direct governance and mutual accountability with respect to school reforms

However, it must be amply evident that a policy paradigm envisioned above is not observable through an instantaneous transformation to a 'bottom-up approach' and its attendant expressions in terms of people driven policy making, planning and implementation. Therefore, initial experiences, where the bureaucracy jointly engages with the local level civic institutions towards assuming responsibility for school processes, can only be interpreted as indicators of the changing mindset of administrative officials to efforts of Prajayatna to establish mechanisms of responsiveness and accountability of governance structures to a larger polity.

Most of the initiatives undertaken by various decentralised structures, whether the school committees or the panchayat institutions have involved the educational bureaucracy in different ways, from a more passive participatory role in a dialogue on school improvement to a more active one as a collaborator of change by responding to the school development plans formulated by these structures.

In the light of such an understanding, the concerns are about ensuring mechanisms that foster local-local dialogue (among the different stakeholders, especially the education department and the panchayats and the school committees), and establishing processes that empower the local civic institutions to articulate, negotiate and determine a greater role in decentralised planning. Simultaneously, initiating mechanisms that ensure accountability of these institutions to their constituents for carrying out mandated responsibilities, are also issues that need the immediate attention of not only development organisations but the State machinery.

Some of the immediate concerns with respect to specific capacity building measures would be:

- Financial planning and budgeting which can no longer be relegated to an exclusive bureaucratic domain, but should be integrated as a crucial element in decentralised planning. This can, by tying funding to performance, become a condition for accountability of decentralized structures towards responsible and effective utilization of funds.

With inadequate financial powers vested with the institutions of local self-governance, the school development plans articulated and prioritised at the school level by the school committee and the parent communities, and which require support from the relevant Panchayat Raj structure, often remain mere plans. Mechanisms to ensure local level financial planning and expenditure autonomy thus emerges as a critical pre-requisite to sustain processes already initiated towards school reforms. Concurrently, there arises a need for countervailing monitoring and accountability mechanisms- more in the nature of mutual accountability between different local level structures, community and fund devolving structures, rather than a central monitoring system that is self-defeating in terms of its conceptualisation.

- Defining “community participation” in terms of mutually accountable mechanisms that ensure transparency in provision of public services whether through local civic institutions or the established administrative bureaucracy. A complementary aspect would be the provision for independent and reliable sources of information about the level of resources being devolved to the local officials, conditions of use, investment options, local contribution required, basic costs and design standards, and how the larger community can access political deliberations over use of these funds. Sharing and exchange of such information between the stakeholders would be crucial towards providing ‘conditions for transparency and accountability’ during implementation.

## Participation - democratic structures

An impact of community interventions, generally not apparent in the form of tangible outcomes, is the gradual reversal of existing dominant societal mores from participation of hitherto marginalised sections (caste or gender-based) to more representative decision-making structures (formal or informal) previously under the sole influence of the socio-economically privileged. However, questions like 'who has access to decentralised mechanisms' and 'whose voice get reflected in plans and decisions' are often ignored in a discourse on decentralised mechanisms for user participation.

The very nature of the processes ensure the active participation of a diverse group - the entire village community in the Shikshana Grama Sabhas; and the school committee members, Gram Panchayat members, educational functionaries in the orientation workshops for school committee members or Gram Panchayat Presidents and Secretaries. A broad-based participation where all stakeholders have a voice implies non-pre-emption of plans or resources by specific interest groups or dominant power structures at the local level. The subtle but gradual nature of such processes is evident in the formal voice that marginalised groups, whether caste or gender-based, have had in the processes and their outcomes in terms of school development plans and action towards implementing these plans.



## local empowerment

### *Empowerment of the hitherto marginalised*

The small village of Handiguddada Kavalu, located between Mysore and Kodagu district, has a population of 50 families. The people belong to the socially and economically underprivileged Kuruba community and work as coolies on estates of landowners. The number of children per family is high as they see children as a source of income. The people have, due to the socio-economic realities confronting their existence, traditionally thought that issues of education and school were out of their purview and they were to only concentrate on earning a livelihood. Despite a pre-primary school under ITDP (Integrated Tribal Development Programme), elder children looked after their younger siblings. A primary school (till 5th) was started in 1999 which had 50 children and 2 teachers.



When the school committee training at the Gram Panchayat level was conducted at Bailukuppe in Feb 2002, the village members and committee members from Handiguddada Kavalu attended but were not ready to discuss their issues in the presence of the school committees from other villages in the Gram Panchayat. Later, after the meeting concluded, they began to share about the issues confronting their school. As there was no school building, 4 classes were conducted along with the anganwadi (pre-school) in the community hall. This was despite the fact that both land and money had been sanctioned for the school. The school could only boast of a single blackboard. Of the two teachers, one usually arrived at school in an intoxicated state and day-to-day functioning of the school depended on the wilful behaviour of the teachers. Not surprisingly, the levels of learning were low. The villagers were hesitant to take up issues of learning as they felt inadequate due to their lack of education. Furthermore visiting officials did not take their opinions seriously. The distribution of food in the pre-primary was highly irregular and the ITDP (Integrated Tribal Development Programme) run facility was about to close as the teachers had not received their salary for many months.

The school committee members took some decisions subsequent to the training programme: to speak to the teacher about his inappropriate behaviour; to meet the Gram and Taluk Panchayat and the BEO (Block Education Officer) regarding the school and the construction of a school building; to enquire about the proper distribution of rice to the school children, to visit the Taluk level Integrated Tribal Development Department with



regard to the functioning of the Anganwadi(pre-school), and to conduct a Shikshana Grama Sabha to communicate and formalise with the larger community the above decisions.

Various members took up responsibilities for the above issues. The Mahila Sangha started monitoring the regular distribution of rice to the children through the local fair price shop. The successful resolution of the issue boosted their morale and the Mahila Sangha took up the issue of the anganwadi(pre-school) with the ITDP. They were also successful in restarting the pre-school and keeping it functional. The community members at first spoke to the errant teacher about his behaviour and subsequently decided to take up the issue with the BEO after such efforts did not have the desired result. The school committee members and village elders visited the Gram Panchayat office and submitted applications regarding the school and received a positive response.

With sustained efforts from the community, the behaviour of the errant teacher began to change while parents gradually send their children neatly dressed to school; slowly learning levels began to improve. When the construction of the school was sanctioned and work was started, the community monitored the process closely and decided to discontinue construction when they observed that it was of poor quality. Only on subsequent assurance of quality work did the community members allow the construction to resume.

The community began to look at different avenues for mobilising resources for the school. A local organisation donated funds with which essentials for the school were purchased. A compound has been sanctioned and a neighbouring estate owner was approached to provide water to the school. The community is planning one more room for the school. They have also started to follow-up on their children's learning through periodic meetings with the teachers.

**B**achallidoddi, a village in Allimaranahalli Gram Panchayat is 15 km from the Taluk headquarters in Kanakapura, Bangalore Rural District. With 100 families, the total population of the village is around 523. A predominantly Lambani population, the main occupation of the people of the village is agriculture - as labourers employed by the landed gentry. The village lacks basic facilities in terms of access due to improper roads, absence of public transport, as also the absence of a primary health centre or a fair price shop. In these conditions, the community never thought about their children except for involving them in agricultural work or as bonded labourers in the houses of the landowners.

Kebbedoddi, another village near Bachallidoddi, also a Lambani tanda(habitat), has a population of about 200 with about 20 families. There is only 1 primary school (till 5th ) and 1 anganwadi(pre-school) for both the villages of Bachallidoddi and Kebbedoddi.

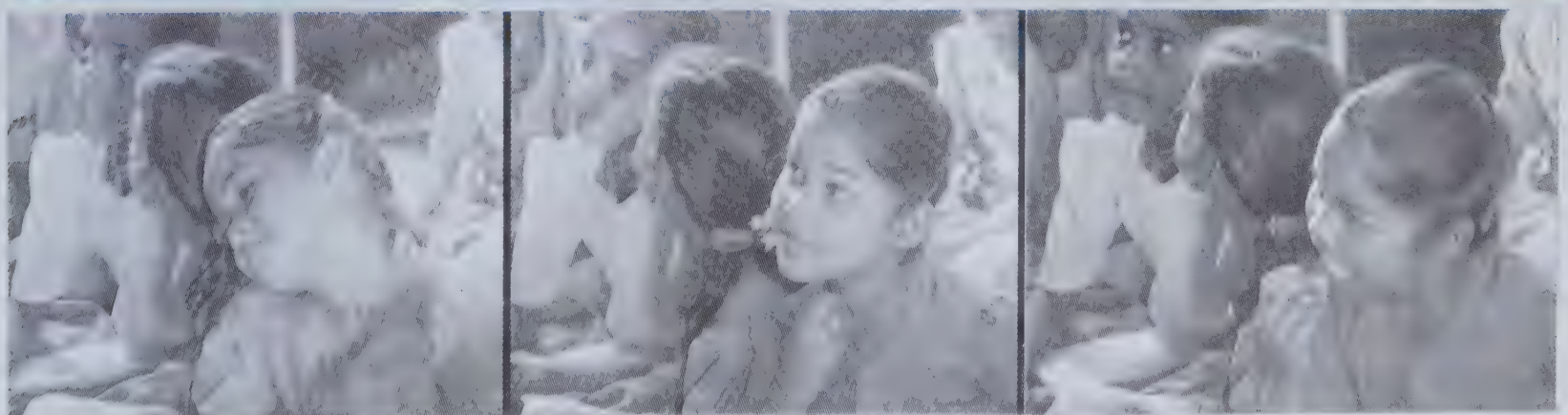


The primary school started in 1989 in the verandah of a house and moved to a one-room independent existence in 1991. This school had 39 children and a single teacher. Though the anganwadi(pre-school) started in 1986, there was no independent structure for the pre-school and it continues to function from the verandah of a house even today. There are 55 children who come to the pre-school.

Following the School information campaign, the Shikshana Grama Sabha was conducted for the twin villages of Bachallidoddi and Kebbedoddi in August, 2000. At this point in time the status of the school was a domain alienated from the community - most of the children of school going age were working as bonded labourers, parents of children who came to school did not ensure either regularity or proper school timings, and though the school had a VEC it was only on record.

Discussions during the Shikshana Grama Sabha centred around school dropouts, roof repairs for the school and the need for one more classroom. The 7-member Citizens' Action Group (prior to formation of the School Development and Monitoring Committees) emerging from the gram sabha assumed responsibility to address the above issues. These members participated in the Gram Panchayat level discussions and shared with panchayat members the decisions taken by the community members regarding the school. Periodic meetings were organised with the parent community to discuss the issue of school dropouts and regularity in school. With the formation of the school committees and their active involvement in this issue, not only have general enrolment and attendance in the school increased substantially, but girl child enrolment which was insignificant has also improved. In 2002-2003, the school had 2 teachers and a total of 89 children of which 45 were girl children.

The school committee has constructed an extra classroom with resources mobilised from the community and have also purchased a site for the Anganwadi(pre-school). In discussions with the community, the school committee is also planning to take up the issue of a playground, 2 more classrooms and 2 more teachers. The Taluk Panchayat President has taken up the responsibility for the construction of a compound wall. The community is planning to provide furniture and teaching-learning materials by mobilising money to supplement the funds available with the school committees.





Though it is not possible to categorise the representativeness of the participatory structures engaging with school reform with information from the Impact Assessment Survey per se, the initiatives undertaken independently by civic groups like the Parent's Groups, Youth Groups and Women's Groups (refer Graph vi) indicate the willingness and ability of varied interest groups at the village level to articulate, engage with, and contribute towards improving the conditions in the local government school.

**Graph vi**

*Issues addressed by Parents' groups/ Youth groups/ Mahila sanghas*



Notes:  
TLSM=Teaching Learning Sports Materials, SPS = School Physical Surrounding ,  
Bldg=Building, Awadi=Anganawadi, Elecr=Electricity, Cmpnd=Compound

The horizontal axis indicates the initiatives of the local civic groups as a % of the different groups which have taken an initiative with respect to the issue in question while the absolute number of such initiatives are indicated at the head of the corresponding bars

An allied aspect is that of community contribution towards the reform initiatives, not only in terms of monetary inputs but also contributions of material, labour, and land which would have had to be purchased if they were not provided and therefore may be considered substitutes for monetary inputs.

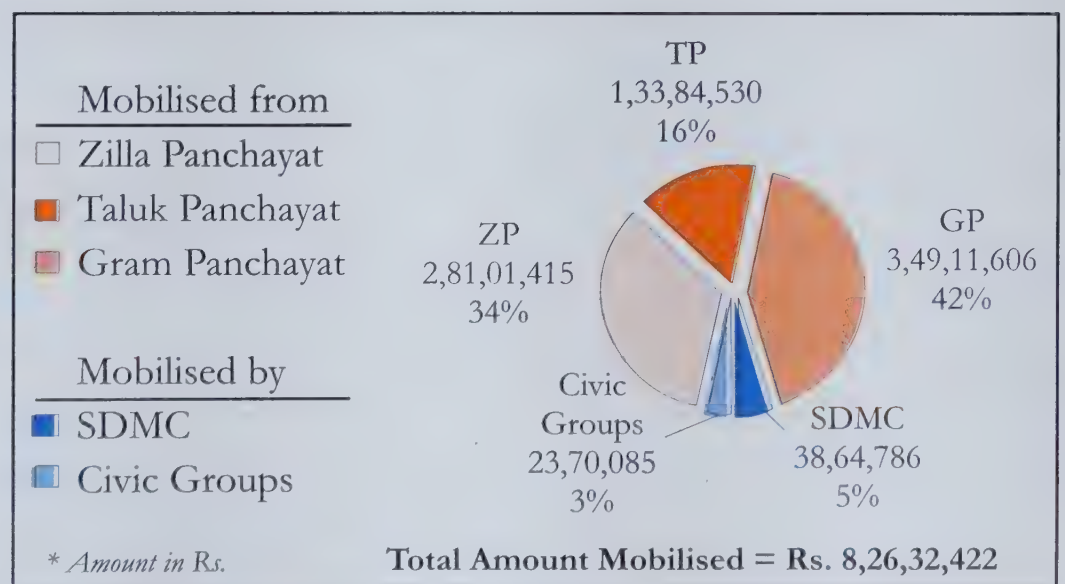


*Resources mobilised by Parents' groups, Youth groups and Mahila Sanghas (civic groups)*

Issue	No of civic groups	Resources mobilised (Rs.)
SPS	112	173,145
FurnChild	36	249,880
FurnTeach	121	139,655
Toilet	5	216,500
Water	122	81,745
Electr	22	46,400
Land	10	224,000
Bldg	13	467,100
Walls	84	317,700
Awadi	3	200,000
PG	4	27,000
Cmpnd	21	134,750
TLSM	38	88,360
SplClass	2	950
Teachers	4	2,300
Health	1	600
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,370,085</b>

The Impact Assessment Survey indicates, (refer: Table vi) that community contribution has indeed been a strong mechanism towards change initiatives presumably as a form and expression of participation, whereby communities contributing towards different aspects of school improvement are more likely to ensure - that their children are enrolled in the schools and attend regularly, that the performance of teachers is periodically appraised, and that sufficient attention is paid to curriculum, infrastructure, teaching-learning processes and other aspects of school operations that have relevance to the effective functioning of the school. However, Prajayatna recognises that community contributions are required and justified to the extent that they are manifestations of a sense of community ownership of change processes at the local level and should not become an easy recipe for proponents of a free-market system who make a case for privatising public services in the social area.

Therefore, what becomes expedient, is developing information systems to collate and review data on the nature of community contributions so that oft cited problems like poor design and accountability mechanisms, inappropriate use of scarce resources, high volatility of such contributions, and reinforcement of existing social inequalities - plaguing such initiatives, do not in reality abstract from the broader purpose which Prajayatna envisions for such contributions.



That there is a need to explore differences in motivations for community financing as also the nature of such investments, particularly within the 'urban-rural differential paradigm', is also a feedback from the Impact Assessment Survey that the programme seeks to address through its future interventions.

## Significant Reflections

The current educational climate in our country is indicative of a situation, where the majority of stakeholders in the process of education are preoccupied more with the issue of universalisation and compulsory elementary education. Providing quality education is becoming synonymous with new plans to increase enrolment and retention, schemes to involve the community to participate in schools, provision of resources that is not a priority (e.g: computers in schools where there are no rooms for children or basic infrastructural facilities like water, toilets) more teacher training programmes to improve classroom processes and providing increased funding for infrastructure. Though all these are very useful and may contribute to quality education, the lifeline of quality education is missing- that is ownership of schools. Without ensuring ownership, all else is like building a roof without the foundation.

Quality raises the more crucial question about what a school means or does to a society. It reflects a society's perception or interpretation of its educational needs. Here, quality could connote many different aspects. It could mean a learning that is relevant to the context of the community, a more transparent system which provides the parents, the child and the community information about the school performance, or about teachers being effective facilitators, or an opportunity to take responsibility to participate in decision making. For quality, which encompasses the aspects mentioned, it is impossible for the machinery that is far removed from the community needs to determine this.

### Who owns the schools?

The experience through the different processes in the 6 districts mentioned in this document, reinforces the understanding that for education reform or quality education to take place the most important question to be asked and answered is regarding the core issue of community ownership- in the sense of who is in-charge of the process of reform. Prajayatna believes that education can be *qualitative*, only if it is based on a community vision. When a community defines its vision of education, it not only brings with it a sense of ownership but necessarily makes the community accountable to realise this vision. Therefore quality education holds within itself the seeds of accountability.

But, what remains to be seen are the mechanisms that would ensure accountability into practice. It is observed, that there is a trend to speak of 'empowering the community' to be accountable, without developing a mechanism for the same. For the community, to be prepared to take on more responsibility of management of the educational structure at the local level, there have to be mechanisms to enable this participation. Some of the questions that the programme was confronted with, were - how would the community participate without the existence of a structure and how could such structures be facilitated, and even if structures are built, how would they be appropriately designed to reflect people's aspirations?



## Not a set of things to do

Our experiences in working with communities demonstrate that the decision made by parents in enrolling a child to school usually depends on their terming a school 'good' or 'bad'. Quality cannot be simply a good or a bad school. Neither can it be defined and handed over as a set of things to do for the community. It should be so that leads one on a path of continuous improvement and this is possible only through the local community relating to the school on a regular basis and thus being accountable. Through the Shikshana grama sabhas and the school committee meetings, the community is enabled to set their own goals regarding the school wherein the breakthrough for improvements have to be made by the individual schools, children, teacher, parents and the local community. Quality comes from the need for a demand to improve. Prajayatna supports the community in articulating this demand.

## Redefining the role of the State

Accountability at another level also rests with the state machinery. It is understood that the present system of functioning of Government schools is a direct reflection of the inability of the machinery (bureaucracy, educational administrators, teachers and the elected representatives) to solve persistent problems of declining quality - high dropout rates, disempowering, curriculum and methodology, low enrolment, continual absenteeism of children and absence of community ownership. While speaking of accountability of the state, it is important that the state ought to evolve new approaches to look at itself more as a facilitator rather than a provider. In this respect, the state should accompany the community in providing adequate information to take informed decisions regarding educational resources and budgets in a manner that is transparent where the public can access it. It should enable the de-

bureaucratisation of the educational system leading to sharing of resources more at the district, block and village level appropriate to needs, rather than a uniform approach. The government should also re-define the roles of the different functionaries so that the process of educational reconstruction is more of a community initiative.

Presently, the discourse on quality education invariably focuses on infrastructure, teacher recruitment, text books and more recently the thrust on computers and the internet but the structure in which the education system operates is always ignored. There is a need for a shift from such an input-driven approach to a more empowerment-

driven perspective. In the event of inadequacies in the system, rather than facilitating the people to have the means and the strength to address those issues, there is a tendency to *provide*, if at all it is done. This has led to a situation where people do not take initiative. Instead, they wait for someone else to solve the problems in their-very- own- backyard. This is not an argument to say that people will address issues themselves. The machinery needs to let go of control and centralisations and need to actively facilitate their empowerment.



Meeting in Marabihal, Hagaribommanahalli Taluk, Bellary District.



Some of the learnings that emerge from the first attempt to comprehensively document the impact of Prajayatna's efforts to effect educational reform through community ownership are:

The need for **accessible and relevant information**

During the implementation of various processes, it has been recognised, that there is a need to make information on different aspects pertaining to education, accessible and relevant to the community, the civic institutions like the school committees and the panchayat raj institutions.

This would imply that structures like the school committees and the Gram Panchayat are facilitated to collect, manage, analyse and reflect on education-related information to enable the community towards a process of continuous dialogue, planning and engaging with the school. This would lead to developing an impact-driven information system that supports people, both in terms of content and structure, to identify and address increasingly complex and systemic issues.

The need for **an institutionalised mechanism** to evolve a framework for people-driven policy.

Such a policy would reflect articulations, aspirations, and plans of the different stakeholders in the form of a collective strategic direction. The framework should also include a method for engagement of the stakeholders in the realisation of the same. This in turn implies building capacities of the community, school committees and Gram Panchayat, and the Education Department to plan and progressively effect changes to formulate a collective vision and agenda for educational reform.

The need to address **issues of learning**.

Issues of change, progressing from the more tangible ones of school infrastructure and facilities to issues of learning, would be an indicator that would not only reflect the capacity of stakeholders to assume responsibility for a process directly affecting their lives, but also their ability to gradually understand the systemic nature of the education process and its attendant concerns.

Decentralisation of **educational governance at Gram Panchayat level**

While exploring effectiveness of structures, it has been observed that the Gram Panchayat can act as an effective forum for prioritising issues, planning for schools, and school resource sharing. There is also a possibility of a decentralised democratic process of educational governance involving the three major stakeholders - the school committees, the Gram Panchayat, and the Education Department at this level. This also becomes important in the present context where even the scheme-driven initiatives have an inherent debilitating effect on decentralised governance mechanisms. Elected leaders have very little say in the formulation of guidelines, selection of beneficiaries, scheme implementation and monitoring. Tied funds (in the form of schemes), accountability of administrators only to the line departments, and limited administrative decentralisation act as deterrents for elected leaders to realise their roles as effective representatives of local self-government institutions. What assumes a significant dimension towards strategies to define the future work of Prajayatna is the impact of structures like the school committees on the status of Panchayat-Raj structures with attendant concerns about effective governance and accountability. Does the proliferation of multiple structures at the local level endanger their viability and

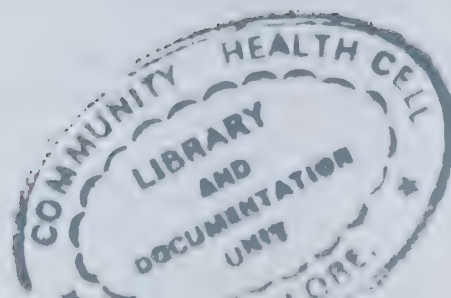


sustainability? Is it possible to evolve a workable power equation (in terms of roles and responsibilities) between the school committees and the Gram Panchayats that is synergistic and helps ongoing school reform processes? These are some of the questions that the programme would need to explore during the course of its work in the imminent future.

The work of Prajayatna is **not a model, that should be schematised.**

Though the present model of the work has had considerable impact for a beginning, it needs to be understood that it is not an experience or a process that can be converted into a scheme for implementation as is the case always with a new model/approach. It is not another approach to or method of or tool of community participation. It is not a process which can be transplanted as a model to be upscaled, quantified into number of processes and the costs incurred therein.

It is an approach, that has to take into cognisance the inherent diversity in local situations, the structures operating in these contexts, the experience of these communities in terms of institutional learning and above all the preparedness of these environments to approach an issue like educational reform. The approach of the work, though reflecting certain common premises, has been very contextual to the work in each of the six districts observed in the socio-economic, cultural and political diversity existing in these environments. It is also understood, that any intervention to effect community ownership of educational processes should recognise different factors while evolving strategies to provide relevant information, access to resources and an understanding of the education system operating in that context.





## Survey Methodological details

### *A process for assessing impact*

Programme assessment refers to an ongoing process of collecting and analysing data to measure the performance of a programme against expected results. To a large extent the nature and characteristics of the data that inform such assessment is dependent on the philosophy and objectives governing an ongoing programme assessment plan.

For Prajayatna, the philosophy governing continuous assessment derives from an action research perspective where critical reflection alternates with action. Within an action research perspective, action, informed by understanding, becomes the determinant of change. This makes the assessment process an emergent one, where method and data and interpretation and action develop simultaneously, and from one time frame to the other.

What the above philosophy underlying assessment implies is a re-examination of conventional approaches to collect and analyse data. Standard data collection methods like Surveys, Focused Group Discussions and Interviews need to be supplemented with participatory group processes where the objective is to reach more coherent interpretations through multiple data sources and dialectical methods for triangulation and analysis.

It is believed that such an action research paradigm can provide an enabling environment where people become participants within the system - whether of change determination, change implementation or change assessment. Moreover, this would also help generate a new knowledge base which is grounded in the reflection on the experiences of the people made by the people themselves during the course of change.

The following provides details pertaining to the processes associated with the first attempt to carry out a comprehensive Impact Assessment of the work, within the context of the aforementioned action research philosophy that underlines Prajayatna's understanding of assessment.

## Quantitative

### *Design of Survey Instruments*

There were two questionnaires that formed the primary data sources for the Impact Assessment Survey. Base-line data was collated from the School Information Campaign Questionnaires already collected through its ongoing data collection process facilitated by taluk-level volunteers. Other base-line data was collected from reports of the different SGS and SDMC meetings facilitated by Prajayatna.

The Impact Assessment Survey Questionnaire was a condensed version of the 23-page SIC Questionnaire addressing specific issues on which data could be collected from a large number of schools within a short-time frame. The Questionnaire was so designed as to provide data on the following aspects:

- the base-line situation of the school with respect to specific issues; (this data was obtained from the corresponding SIC)
- the present situation of the school with respect to specific issues;
- which stakeholder group assumed primary responsibility for any change that took place between the base-line situation and the present situation;
- the monetary and non-monetary contributions of the different groups towards addressing the issues/problems.

*Therefore the Improvement in the Analysis are the schools where there was a problem as reflected in the SIC and for which change has taken place as reflected in the LAS Questionnaire.*

The following table provides an outline of the issues addressed by the Questionnaire and the description of what was covered under these broader categories:

Issues	Description	Legend for Issues as used in the Graphs	
School Physical Surroundings	removal of garbage and health hazards, cleaning of school premises, building of garden, removal of/from places of disturbance and similar issues	SPS	
Furniture	provision of furniture for children and teachers	Furn	FurnChild FurnTeach
Toilet	ensuring cleanliness/usability of toilets and construction of toilets	Toilet	
Water	work pertaining to provision of water facility - from provision of storage vessels to construction of water tank	Water	
Electricity	work pertaining to provision of electricity facility	Electr	
Land	work pertaining to provision of land for the school from acquisition of land to re-occupation of encroached land	Land	
Building	work pertaining to school building from small repairs to construction of new rooms	Bldg	
Classroom Walls	decoration of school walls with teaching-learning materials	Walls	
Anganwadi	ensuring proper functioning of anganwadi - from starting a new anganwadi to ensuring regular supply of food in anganwadi	Awadi	
Playground	work pertaining to provision of land for playground, from acquisition of land to levelling of existing land	PG level	
Compound	work pertaining to compound, from repairs and construction of fencing, to construction of pucca compound	Cmpnd	
TLSM	provision of teaching-learning and sports materials	TLSM	
Special Classes	provision of supportive classes through teachers or members from the community	SplClass	
Teachers	efforts to ensure adequate number of teachers	Teachers	
Health	efforts to ensure addressal of health issues	Health	
Enrolled Children	work pertaining to enrolment/re-enrolment of children	EnrolChld	



The Questionnaire identified the following as the different stakeholder groups who could have assumed primary responsibility for any Improvement i.e. *a change between the base-line situation and the present situation* : The Zilla Panchayat, the Taluk Panchayat, the Gram Panchayat, the SDMC, any Citizens' Action Group, any community interest group like the Mahila Sangha or Youth Group or Parents' Group, the Education Department and related schemes, and any other non-profit organisation.

### *Sample characteristics*

The Survey consisted of

- the population for the Study which comprised all the schools reached out to across the six districts by Prajayatna through village-level meetings on education the Shikshana Grama Sabhas and/or through the Grama Panchayat level training programmes for the School Development and Monitoring Committees; (only meetings and training programmes facilitated till the month of August, 2002 were considered for the study)

<b>District</b>	<b>No. of schools under Study Group</b>
Bangalore Urban	221
Bangalore Rural	552
Mysore	603
Chitradurga	308
Bellary	195
Bijapur	223
<b>Total</b>	<b>2102</b>

### *Data Collection Processes and Analysis*

A pilot-study was conducted with 6 schools from each district where data-collection was administered by district team-members. The final questionnaire for the survey incorporated feedback from the pilot-study.

The Survey for the study was facilitated through taluk-level volunteers. A comprehensive training manual was prepared and the volunteers trained through a one-day training workshop in each district.

Preliminary coding of survey questionnaires was carried out in the Bangalore office of Prajayatna and thereafter assigned to a professional data-entry team. Analysis of data was carried out by Prajayatna using standard statistical software and tools.

## Qualitative

Qualitative data was collected mainly through Personal Interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs). The stakeholders covered through these processes included SDMC members, Gram Panchayat members, school teachers and Education Department as well as other concerned government officials (BEOs, BRCs, CRPs, Panchayat Secretaries, Education Coordinators, Panchayat Extension Officers, DPEP officers). Interviews as well as Focussed Group Disscussions were facilitated within a semi-structured framework to facilitate analysis of qualitative data.

Though extensive qualitative data has been assimilated, only case studies have been used for the Impact Assessment Study, as translation and analysis of the huge amount of qualitative data would imply postponing sharing of the findings from the Impact Assessment Survey.



## A Glossary of frequently used words / terms / abbreviations

MAYA	Movement for Alternatives and Youth Awareness - is a development and training organisation working to address children's rights with a specific focus on the eradication of child labour and reform in elementary education. Initiated in Nov 1989, MAYA has been working since the last 14 years.
Prajayatna	Prajayatna the Citizens' Initiative on Elementary Education in Karnataka - is the educational reform programme of MAYA, working since 1999 to facilitate a systemic change in the existing educational system through institutionalising processes of community ownership that would impact structures, practices and policy of elementary education in Karnataka.
CACL-K	Campaign Against Child Labour, Karnataka - is a network of organisations working towards eradication of child labour
SDMC	School Development and Monitoring Committees are school-level civic institutions, comprising of 9 parent members and the Head teacher who is the secretary of the SDMC .It was effected by the Education Department in August 2001 for all government schools in Karnataka.
SBC	School Betterment Committees, parent body at the school level in the urban areas prior to the formation of the SDMCs.
VEC	Village Education Committees, parent body at the school level in the rural areas prior to the formation of the SDMCs
Panchayat Raj Institutions	Panchayat Raj Institutions are the decentralised local self-government structures effected by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments and in Karnataka by the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act 1993, comprising the Grama Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats as a three-tier local governance hierarchy.
GP	Gram Panchayat - village - level decentralised structure
TP	Taluk Panchayat - block- level decentralised structure
ZP	Zilla Panchayat - district-level decentralised structure
SC / ST	Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) are meant to convey socially and economically backward communities and include people historically oppressed, exploited and marginalised.
DPEP	The District Primary Education Programme is a Centrally sponsored scheme aided by the World Bank and aims to achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education in the country through district-specific planning.
SSA	The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan - a government initiated programme to achieve Universalisation of Elementary Education within a definite time frame.
SIC	The School Information Campaign - a comprehensive school information survey carried out by Prajayatna.
SGS	The Shikshana Grama Sabha - a village-level meeting on education involving all stakeholders, facilitated by Prajayatna.
CAG	Citizens' Action Group formed consequent to the Shikshana Grama Sabha prior to formation of SDMCs in August 2001. At present SDMCs are enabled as decentralised school-level structures during the Shikshana Grama Sabha process.
Hobli	A revenue region comprising on an average 8 -10 Gram Panchayats.
Hobli, Taluk & District Reports	Documents prepared and used by Prajayatna during facilitation of meetings with Gram Panchayat Presidents and Secretaries and shared with relevant Education Department officials. These reports present information on the status of the schools in the Hobli/Taluk/District, the initiatives taken by different stakeholders, and specific concerns with schools and education at the Hobli/Taluk/District-level.
Gram Panchayat level charts for SDMCs	Data sheets on schools in the Gram Panchayat collated from the SIC and shared with SDMCs at the Gram Panchayat level SDMC meeting.

CPI, DDPI, BEO, BRC, CRC, CEO, ECO, EO	Commissioner for Public Instruction, Deputy Directors for Public Instruction, Block Education Officer. Block Resource Person, Cluster Resource Centre Coordinator, Chief Executive Office, Education Coordinator, Executive Officer
GHPS	Government Higher Primary School, GLPS - Government Lower Primary School, GHS - Government High School.
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly .
CTE	College for Teachers' Education. There are 10 CTEs in Karnataka.
NGO	Non-government Organisation.
IAS	Impact Assessment Survey.
DIET	District Institute for Education & Training. There are 20 DIETs in Karnataka.
Chinnara Angala & Ba Marali Shale	School enrolment programmes conducted by the Education Department.



IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

Cover Sheet

Name of the school	Village	Grama Panchayat	Taluk	District

Use the following code to indicate the category to which the respondent(s) belong:

ZP	TP	GP	SDMC	CAG	Mahila Sangha	Youth Group	Parent Group	Teachers	For any other
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	please specify

(Note: a Mahila or Youth respondent not belonging to any other specific category like the ZP, TP, GP, SDMC, or CAG and member of a local Women's Group or Youth Group should be categorised under Mahila Sangha or Youth Group as applicable; a Parent respondent not a member of the ZP / TP / GP / SDMC / CAG / Mahila Sangha should be recorded under **Parent Group** )

Name of the respondent(s)	Signature of the respondent(s)	Category

For each of the questions indicating initiative, please determine the unique (**only One**) group with whose initiative the task has been completed (identify group which the individual is from even if an individual was responsible for completion of initiative).

Please use the following code to identify the group and note the same in the specific boxes under the column (If Yes, by whom - enter code 1 to 13):

ZP	TP	GP	SDMC	CAG	Mahila Sangha	Youth Group	Parent Group	Teachers	Edn Dept	Govt scheme	Other NGOs	Any Other
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

(Note: initiatives taken by a parent group which does not specifically belong to any of the following: ZP / TP / GP / SDMC/CAG/ Mahila Sangha should be recorded under **Parent Group**)

**Please note:** Questions with '**Mobilised resources**' imply mobilisation and donation of both financial and non-financial resources from all groups and individuals. Please make a note of all groups/individuals and their respective contributions – both in financial terms and in terms of non-financial inputs. Groups should be classified under the 13 categories given in the Cover Sheet. Entries should be concise.

Note

- Volunteers should carefully peruse the Training Manual for Volunteers prior to starting work on data collection. For clarification of doubts not addressed through the Training Manual, the volunteers should revert to the District team-members.
- Volunteers should ensure availability of relevant information prior to data collection for a particular school. This would include all information pertaining to the **Information Sheet**, and SIC status (Questions with reference to the SIC page and question no.) which district team-members are required to provide prior to giving the questionnaires to the volunteers.
- District team-members, at the time of collecting the Questionnaires from the volunteers should ensure that all aspects of information are verified and any doubts with regard to the same are clarified.

Name of volunteer	Name of district team-member

A. School physical surroundings		Has there been an initiative taken? (Tick appropriate category)	If Yes, by whom (enter code 1 to 13)	SIC Ref	SIC Status (encircle appropriate category)
1	Removed garbage from school premises	Yes No		Ask:	Was garbage on school premises a problem Yes No
2	Removed garbage dump/public urinal or any other health hazard (will include cleaning of drains) immediately adjacent to school	Yes No		Pg 16 (15 d)	Was any health hazard Within 50 metres OR Within 100 metres Yes No
3	Clean (made arrangements for cleaning of) school premises regularly	Yes No		Pg 16 (14 c)	Was condition of school dilapidated Yes No
4	Constructed flag post for the school	Yes No		Ask:	Did the school have a flag post Yes No
5	Built garden on school premises	Yes No		Pg 16 (14 e)	Did the school have a garden Yes No
6	Removed arrack shop from places adjacent/near to the school	Yes No		Pg 16 (15 c)	Was any wine shop/bar Within 50 metres OR Within 100 metres of the school Yes No
7	Removed places like market, temple, community meeting place that cause disturbance in terms of noise and were adjacent/near to the school	Yes No		Pg 16 (15 b)	Did the school have any noise pollution Yes No
8	Decided and consequently have not been using school premises for any purpose other than education i.e. Made arrangements to prevent misuse of school premises (e.g. as rest-rooms, gossiping) and other school facilities (e.g. misuse of water-facilities for washing clothes, misuse of toilet facilities, misuse of playground facilities)	Yes No		Ask:	Was misuse of school premises a problem (that is use for purpose other than education & misuse of facilities like water, toilets) Yes No
	If Yes to any of the above initiatives, then				
	Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)				



B. Infrastructure		Has there been an initiative taken? (Tick appropriate category)		If Yes, by whom (enter code 1 to 13)		SIC Ref	SIC Status ( encircle appropriate category )	
1 Furniture for Children								
* Have you provided (additional) furniture for children in the school		Yes						
If Yes, then		No						
Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)								
2 Furniture for Teachers								
* Have you provided (additional) furniture for teachers in the school		Yes				Ask:	Was there inadequate furniture for teachers in the school	Yes
If Yes, then		No						No
Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)								
3 Toilet								
Constructed new toilet(s)		Yes				Pg 12 (5)	* Insert TOTAL of No. of toilets according to SIC information	
If there are no toilets in the school, go to section 4 - Water		No			* TOTAL no. of toilets at present			
Made existing toilet(s) usable (includes cleaning of toilets)		Yes						Yes
Repaired existing toilet(s)		No						No
If Yes to any one of above initiatives, then		Yes				Pg 12 (5)	If there were toilets according to the SIC, Were the Condition of toilets (any one category): Bad OR Very Bad	
* Are children able to use the toilet(s) in school at present		No						No
		Yes				Ask:	Were children able to use the toilet(s) in school	Yes
		No						No

B. Infrastructure (contd...)		If Yes, by whom (enter code 1 to 13)		SIC Ref	SIC Status ( encircle appropriate category )			
4		Water						
If Yes to any one of above initiatives, then		Provided steel vessel/drum/pot for storing drinking water		Yes	Ask:	* Was there a functional arrangement for drinking water in the school	Yes	
				No			No	
		Cleaned existing water tank		Yes	Ask:	Was there a need to clean the existing water tank	Yes	
				No			No	
		Laid pipeline and tap from water tank		Yes	Ask:	Was there a need to lay a pipeline and tap from water tank	Yes	
				No			No	
Bought / Constructed water tank		Yes	Ask:	Was there a need to construct water tank	Yes			
				No			No	
Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)								
5		Electricity						
If Yes to any one of above initiatives, then		Renewed existing connection by resolving/paying dues		Yes	Ask:	* Was there electricity in the school	Yes	
				No			No	
		Got new connection		Yes				
				No				
		Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)						
6		Land						
If Yes to any one of above initiatives, then		Acquired/Bought land for the school		Pg 11(1)	Was the school building: Own building			Yes
								No
		Got donated land for school		Yes				
				No				
		Got acquired/bought/donated land for school registered		Yes				
		No						
Secured land from GP/others		Yes						
		No						
Got back encroached land		Yes						
		No						
Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)								



B. Infrastructure (contd....)		Has there been an initiative taken? (Tick appropriate category)	If Yes, by whom (enter code 1 to 13)	SIC Ref	SIC Status (encircle appropriate category)
7	School building				
Repaired existing rooms (includes repairs of any of the following: door / window/ roof / room)		Yes No		Ask:	Were repairs to school building or classrooms required  Were additional classrooms needed
Got extra room(s): By using school rooms not being used previously		Yes No		Pg 17 (16 a)	
Got extra room(s): By getting rooms on rent / From voluntary contribution of available space		Yes No			
Constructed new rooms		Yes No			
Completed construction of rooms under construction but left incomplete		Yes No		Pg 17 (16 b)	Were Any classrooms under construction
Constructed new school building where no school existed		Yes No		Ask:	Was there a need to construct a new school building
If Yes to any one of above, then		If Yes, whether Temporary Permanent			
Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)					
8	Classroom walls				
Whitewashed/painted walls/painted blackboard across walls		Yes No	* Year	Pg 15 (14 b)	* Year on which school was last white-washed
Decorated walls with pictures, etc.		Yes No		Ask:	Were school walls decorated with pictures, etc. previously
If Yes to any one of above, then		Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)			

been an initiative taken? (Tick appropriate category)		If Yes, by whom (enter code 1 to 13)		Ref	(encircle appropriate category)		
9	Anganwadi	* No. of Anganwadis functioning at present		Ask:	* How many Anganwadis were functioning previously		
	Started new anganwadi	Yes		Ask:	Was there a need felt to start a new Anganwadi		
		No			Yes		
					No		
	Restarted an anganwadi that was closed	Yes		Ask:	Was there an existing anganwadi that was closed down		
		No			Yes		
					No		
	Constructed new building for anganwadi	Yes		Ask:	Was there a need felt for a new Anganwadi building		
		No			Yes		
					No		
	Repaired anganwadi building	Yes		Ask:	Was there a need felt for repairs of Anganwadi building		
		No			Yes		
					No		
	Arranged for local teaching support/helpers for the anganwadi	Yes		Ask:	Was there a lack of teachers / helpers for the anganwadi		
		No			Yes		
					No		
	Ensured regular supply of food in anganwadi	Yes		Ask:	Was there a problem with respect to regular supply of food in anganwadi		
		No			Yes		
					No		
	Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)						
	If Yes to any one of above, then						
10	Playground	Pg 13 (10)		Was there a playground		Yes	
						No	
	Acquired/Bought land for playground	Yes					
		No					
	Got donated land for playground	Yes					
		No					
	Got acquired/bought/donated land for playground registered	Yes					
		No					
	Secured land from GP/MLA fund/MP fund/others	Yes					
		No					
	Levelled existing land for playground	Yes					
		No					
	Levelled existing land for playground	Yes		Ask:	Was there a need to level the land for playground		
		No			Yes		
					No		
	Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)						
	If Yes to any one of above, then						



B. Infrastructure (contd...)		Has there been an initiative taken? (Tick appropriate category)	If Yes, by whom (enter code 1 to 13)	SIC Ref	SIC Status (encircle appropriate category )
11	Compound				
	Constructed temporary fencing for compound	Yes No		Pg 17 (16 f)	Does the school have a compound: Yes No
	Constructed pucca compound	Yes No		Pg 17 (16 f)	Was the Condition of Compound wall Bad Yes No
	Repaired existing compound	Yes No			
	If Yes to any one of above, then	Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)			

C. Learning support		Has there been an initiative taken? (Tick appropriate category)	If Yes, by whom (enter code 1 to 13)	SIC Ref	SIC Status (encircle appropriate category )
1	Teaching-learning-sports materials				
	Provided additional charts/maps	Yes No		Pg 13 (9)	Were charts/maps available in the school Yes No
	Repaired old blackboard/Painted old blackboard/ Provided new wooden blackboard	Yes No		Ask:	Was there a need to repair / paint / get new blackboards Yes No
	Ensured usage of available teaching-learning materials	Yes No		Ask:	* Were children allowed usage of available teaching-learning materials Yes No
	Ensured usage of available sports equipment	Yes No		Ask:	* Were children allowed usage of available sports equipment Yes No
	If there was a library, provided cupboard for storage of library books	Yes No		Ask:	If there was a library, was there a need for cupboard for storage of library books Yes No
	If there was a library, ensured lending of books to children	Yes No		Ask:	* If there was a library, were children allowed usage of available library books Yes No
	If Yes to any one of above, then	Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)			

		been an initiative taken? (Tick appropriate category)	by whom (enter code 1 to 13)	Ref	(encircle appropriate category )
2	Special Classes				
Arranged for the first time or arranged additional regular supportive aids in the form of tuition / special classes for children		Yes		Pg 19 (4)	Does SIC information indicate that there was educational support activities for academically weak or other disadvantaged groups
		No			
		Yes			
		No			
Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)					
If Yes to any one of above, then					
3	Teachers				
Got additional teachers (PE/Hindi/others) by applying to BEO/DDPI, etc.		Yes	*Total no. of teachers at present	Pg 5 (1)	* Was there a need for additional teachers for the school
			PE		Indicate total no. of teachers as per SIC information
		No	Hindi		PE
			Others		Hindi
		Yes			Others
		No			
Arranged for/Recruited additional help for teaching from amongst members of the local community					
Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)					
If Yes to any one of above, then					
4	Health				
Provided first-aid kit		Yes		Pg 14 (12 a)	Was there First-Aid Kit
		No			
Arranged for regular health check-up		Yes		Pg 14 (12 c)	Does SIC indicate that the frequency of health check-up was NEVER
		No			
Details of Mobilised Resources (should include details of any donations)					
If Yes to any one of above, then					



D. Children Enrolment		Has there been an initiative taken? (Tick appropriate category)	If Yes, by whom (enter code 1 to 13)		SIC Ref	SIC Status (encircle appropriate category )
1 * Enrolment/Re-enrolment of children supposed to be in school but out-of-school						
		Enrolled/Re-enrolled children (Participated in/Organised - campaign)	Yes		Ask:	Have campaigns for enrolment/re-enrolment of out-of-school children carried out in the past by the community
		No		Yes		
If Yes, then specify numbers enrolled/re-enrolled through the community only (and not through government enrolment programs) for both this year and the last academic year as per following table						
			Girls		Boys	
		SC/ST		Others	SC/ST	Others
			* Total		* Total	
Last year (2001 - 2002)						
This year (2002 - 2003)						
2 Assuming responsibility for children						
		Community members sponsored children	Yes		Ask:	Have community members previously sponsored children (e.g. contribution like note books, uniforms, etc.)
			No			
If Yes, then specify numbers sponsored by the community only (and not through government/other sponsorship programs) for both this year and the last academic year as per following table						
			Girls		Boys	
		SC/ST		Others	SC/ST	Others
			* Total		* Total	
Last year (2001 - 2002)						
This year (2002 - 2003)						

E. Other Issues		initiative taken? (Tick appropriate category)	If Yes,	
1 Meetings on education			Indicate number of meetings	Indicate which Group(s) have generally been present for these meetings using the same code as given in Cover Sheet i.e. code 1 to 13
Have meetings on education (other than Samudayadatta Shale) been convened after Prajayatna meetings (SGS/SDMC)		Yes No		
		Has there been an initiative taken? (Tick appropriate category)	If Yes, by whom (enter code 1 to 13)	
2 Accountability				
Done something to monitor teachers' timings, regularity, malpractice (using children for personal work like bringing food/tea, cleaning vessels, bringing cigarettes, etc.; excessive punishment; misappropriation of school funds, etc.)		Yes No		
Done something to monitor rice distribution (e.g. monitor/display information on: quality and amount of rice distributed, regularity at which such distribution takes place, related misallocation or misappropriation etc.?)		Yes No		
Done something to monitor proper implementation of incentive schemes (scholarships, uniforms, textbooks, etc.)		Yes No		
*(If applicable for the school)				
When did the mid-day meal start in your school?		Date		
Are any of the following a problem with respect to the implementation of the mid-day meal scheme in your school		(encircle appropriate category)		
Lack of coordination between taluk office (tehsildar), GP & SDMC		Yes No		
GP not giving money for vegetables on time		Yes No		
GP not ensuring supply of gas in time when gas provisions are exhausted		Yes No		
Loss in teaching time of teachers		Yes No		
Poor quality of rice provided		Yes No		
SDMCs not assuming responsibility		Yes No		
Disbursement of salary for cook & helper are not done on time		Yes No		
Has there been an initiative taken? (Tick appropriate category)		If Yes, by whom (enter code 1 to 13)		
Yes				
No				
Have you done anything to monitor proper implementation of the mid-day meal scheme?				





## Information Sheet

(To be filled up by district team-members prior to data collection)

School Name	:
SIC Date	:

Meetings conducted with respect to the particular school ( encircle appropriate category )	SGS		SGS Follow Up		SDMC		SDMC Follow Up	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No

Date on which Shikshana Grama Sabha was conducted	:
Date on which SDMC meeting was conducted	:

Person (s) to contact along with relevant details like whether GP member/SDMC member/etc.	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; margin-bottom: 5px;"></div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px;"></div>
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From the SGS and SDMC meeting(s) decision sheet, please indicate the nature of decisions taken at the respective meetings as per following table. Note that the issue list given corresponds directly to the Questionnaire. Therefore decisions taken at the meetings should be appropriately matched; e.g. a decision to construct new rooms should be indicated as encircling 'Yes' under Sl. No. 7.

Sl. No.	The following <b>issues</b> were decided on during the meeting(s):	Shiksana Gram Sabha ( encircle appropriate category )	SDMC meeting ( encircle appropriate category )
1	School physical surroundings (A)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
2	Furniture for children or teachers (B1, B2)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
3	Toilet (B3)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
4	Water (B4)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
5	Electricity (B5)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
6	Land (B6)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
7	School Building (B7)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
8	Classroom Walls (B8)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
9	Anganwadi (B9)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
10	Playground (B10)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
11	Compound (B11)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
12	Teaching/Learning/Sports Material (C1)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
13	Special Class (C2)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
14	Teachers (C3)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
15	Health (C4)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
16	Enrolment (D)	Yes	Yes
		No	No
17	Other Issues	Yes	Yes
		No	No





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This study documents the impact of the approach of Prajayatna - the education reform programme of MAYA, towards ensuring quality education for all children in Karnataka, by facilitating community ownership of educational processes. The study has been conducted in over 2000 schools in the six working districts of Prajayatna namely - Bellary, Bijapur, Chitradurga, Bangalore Rural, Bangalore Urban and Mysore. It examines the argument on why community ownership is *the* key to educational reform through reflections of citizens' initiatives and responses as articulated by members of the school committees, elected representatives of the local self-governing bodies and educational administrators. The study encompassing three years of Prajayatna's work, reconfirms certain convictions and values that shaped the evolution and a direction for the future perspective of the movement.

